

AN EVANGELISTIC PROGRAM IN THE INDONESIAN-AMERICAN
SEVENTH-DAY ADVENTIST CHURCH

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by
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ABSTRACT

An Evangelistic Program in the Indonesian-American Seventh-day Adventist Church

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This project deals with the problem of how to have a more effective evangelistic program in the Indonesian-American Seventh-day Adventist Church in Azusa, California. In their evangelistic outreach no effort is made to include the Muslims, which make up a large majority of the Indonesian community in Southern California. Members of this church should be aware of their heritage as a strong evangelistic people and to realize that their existence as an ethnic church has a specific mission which they alone are able to accomplish--to evangelize their countrymen and countrywomen in the area.

As the result of a study of the history of this church, this paper identifies two main reasons for this problem. The first is the failure to make the necessary adjustments in their evangelistic program as the transition took place from the Dutch-Indonesian to the native-Indonesian phase of its history. This change took place very gradually and imperceptibly that the members of this church carried on their programs as usual, not realizing that they are in a new phase, which makes it necessary for a reconsideration of

their evangelistic outreach program as to include their fellow countrymen of the Muslim faith.

The second reason is their hesitance to go forward in their evangelistic work for fear of the unknown--Islam. This paper seeks to remedy this situation by making an identity awareness--a brief, historical background in Seventh-day Adventist evangelism, and by familiarizing them with some basic concepts in Islam, which is the main emphasis of this project.

To accomplish this, a research was made to understand the Muslim mind from a Christian point of view. A brief historical background of Islam is made and their basic faith and practices as well as summaries for laypeople to understand some of the theological differences which usually come up in an encounter with a Muslim.

Finally, some practical suggestions are made for an effective evangelistic program for this church as well as some valuable hints and counsel for their work among their fellow Indonesians.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

This project deals with the problem of how to be more effective in the evangelistic outreach of the Indonesian-American Seventh-day Adventist Church in Azusa, California.

The reasons why this particular church was chosen for this project are:

1. This is the first Indonesian church in the United States. Started in 1972, it was officially organized by the Seventh-day Adventist denomination in 1974. Later on more Indonesian churches were started in Southern California by the Seventh-day Adventist and other denominations as well.

2. This Azusa Indonesian church has the largest membership among the Indonesian churches and is the only one owning its building facilities, which makes it feel more settled and secure while some of the other churches are still struggling for their very existence.

3. Because of the reasons mentioned above, this church is the best known Indonesian church in Southern California.

4. Therefore, this church feels like a "mother church" which would set an example in all church related activities, especially in the area of evangelism.

5. Finally, the writer has been a member of this

church since it was organized, and has also served as its associate pastor for a period of time before pursuing further studies at the School of Theology at Claremont.

Evangelism in this church was the subject chosen because: (1) holistic evangelism is the task of the church under the Great Commission of Jesus Christ to go and preach the gospel, (2) this most important task has not been given the first priority in this church, (3) Indonesians can most effectively evangelize Indonesians, and finally, (4) the writer, having given more than fifteen years of his life doing evangelistic work in Indonesia, feels the burden to have a strong evangelistic ministry, as do other church members.

The need for a strong evangelistic program has been felt for a long time in this church. Both church members and leaders have voiced feelings of uneasiness over the lack of an evangelistic outreach especially designed for the Indonesian-American population of Southern California. There are some seventy thousand Indonesian-Americans in the United States, and most of them live in California. There are several reasons for feelings of uneasiness.

The Seventh-day Adventist Church is historically a strong evangelistic church. Any Seventh-day Adventist Church feels that it is not doing Christ's Great Commission whenever there is a lack of a strong evangelistic program in the church. One of their baptismal instructions is that

"every church member is under sacred command from Jesus to use his talents in personal soul-winning work in helping to give the Gospel to all the world."¹ Further, most of the church members are first generation immigrants who come from churches in Indonesia that are very enthusiastic in evangelistic work. Many churches hold continuous evangelistic campaigns or revival meetings throughout the year. Members with this background feel very uncomfortable to just sit in church week after week listening to the preacher and doing nothing for the Lord themselves.

There is also the burden in their hearts of reaching their fellow Indonesians with the Gospel message. There is the realization that the most effective way of reaching Indonesians here is by fellow Indonesians. They feel that God has placed this church here with the purpose of proclaiming the Gospel to them, and if they fail to do it, no one else will. God has given this church the specific responsibility of evangelizing the Indonesian-Americans in this area.

If there is a strong desire in the church to do evangelistic work, the question is why such work has not been done. An important asset to evangelism--motivation--is already present, but the church has not made good use of it. What could possibly be the reason behind this situation?

¹General Conference of Seventh-day Adventist, Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual (Washington, D.C.: Seventh-day Adventist, 1976), 60.

Looking critically and openly at the problem may assist the church in coming up with some solutions.

There are, of course, many problems and difficulties faced by anyone doing evangelistic work, and let me mention just a few major ones facing this church today.

One of the major obstacles to a strong evangelistic program in the church, as I see it, strange as it may seem, is growth. Progress is frequently difficult to manage. Growth in one part of the work can easily cause neglect in other areas. Traditionally, church growth is measured in numbers (membership, baptisms, tithes, and offerings) which the pastor can report to the Conference Office. In this respect, the Azusa Indonesian Seventh-day Adventist Church is not behind. New immigrants coming to settle in this area are usually absorbed into this church. So the church grows in numbers without any effort to "win souls." Church growth comes easily from immigrants, not through an aggressive program or efforts on the part of the pastor. If church statistics do not show any growth, then the pastor would have been forced to work harder. Any evangelistic work done in this church amounts to just filling the space in the Conference report showing some evangelistic activity done.

This problem in the church can be helped if the church pastor is willing to use the "Jethro strategy" of delegating his administrative responsibilities to able members in the church.² If the pastor is too busy with the work of church

²Exodus 18:13-27.

administration then he is too busy. This job can be handled by church elders, freeing the pastor to do the most important duty he is called to do--to lead the church in doing the Great Commission given by Christ--the proclamation of the Gospel message.

Another problem which is just as difficult to handle is the feeling of complacency, security, and, hence, indifference toward the Gospel message in this affluent society shown by Indonesians coming from an economically and politically unstable country. This feeling of false security is very hard to penetrate with the Gospel message. In bringing the message to them, the lay evangelist should emphasize that the good news of the Gospel is that the only real security we can have is in fully trusting in Jesus.

These two problems are not discussed in this project because of the one all important problem, as I see it, in the evangelistic work of this church--the failure to evangelize Muslim Indonesians in this area.

Various types of evangelism are being carried out in this church, but none aimed at the Muslims. If members of this church do not evangelize the Indonesian Muslims in this area, no one will. In evangelizing Muslims around the world, the importance of using the native Christians who understand Muslim language and culture is always emphasized.

² Exodus 18:13-27.

Christianization is often synonymous with Westernization in Muslim countries. A redirection in evangelism is very important in this particular church, to include specific, well planned methods of reaching Muslims.

The failure to evangelize the Muslims by this church is caused by several factors:

1. The lack of understanding of the Muslim mind and, hence, the lack of the know-how and the fear of going out to evangelize them.
2. The fear of scaring them away by using the wrong approach.
3. The fact that no matter how well planned evangelism is, according to past experiences, the result is very minimal.

That is why this project capitalizes on trying to understand the Muslim mind, and how to reach them, which will help to do away with some of the fears in this church.

Since this project deals with the strategy of a specific evangelistic program, the writer limits the scope to the methods of communicating and the call to a commitment. The content of the message, as important as it is, obviously is not discussed. The writer does not have in mind a strategy of evangelism for all the people of Indonesia, but deals with an evangelistic program that could be effective in the Azusa Indonesian Seventh-day Adventist Church. However, the universal nature of the program allows

it to be used in other Indonesian churches in the United States and elsewhere.

What evangeleestic work has been done in this church in the past? Every year this church holds at least one public evangelistic campaign. This is the most fruitful method of evangelism in Indonesia, especially in the rural areas where competition is at a minimum. In a Christian village one can just pitch his tent, place a colorful sign up front, turn on the bright lights and some lively Gospel songs and the people will come and listen. In cities, public halls or churches are used. The meetings are heavily advertised using all kinds of media, and the people come and listen. In Indonesia public evangelistic campaigns are effective, but this is the very thing that causes the problem in this Azusa church. Something which is effective in Indonesia does not mean that it is as effective in California.

The Azusa church uses this conventional strategy of evangelism year after year with very poor results, if any at all. They hold these public meetings in different church buildings, mail out thousands of handbills, advertise them in the papers, but only a handful of people show up. Not a single Muslim Indonesian attends any of these meetings. Thousands of Indonesians are not reached using this method. Yet the church keeps doing it year after year, and the pastor can report to the Conference that this church is active in evangelism. One good side-effect of this program is that

it places the members on the firing front of the gospel work; it does give them a good spiritual uplift each time one of these meetings is held.

Some other methods of evangelism used in this church are briefly discussed next.

Monthly church magazines in the Dutch language are mailed to the Dutch-Indonesians. This could be a very effective method of evangelism if there were good follow-up work. It is regretted that there is no such program for the Indonesian-speaking community on a regular basis.

Traditionally, toward the end of the year, the Seventh-day Adventist Church around the world has what it calls "Ingathering" campaigns when every member is expected to go from door to door in the neighborhood, soliciting funds for worthy projects. Church members carry with them pamphlets containing the Gospel message or enrollment cards to a Bible correspondence school. This has been an effective method of evangelism in which this church has participated year after year. However, this effort was done in a local community, and not directed specifically to the Indonesians. Other efforts that have been used sporadically are: personal evangelism, literature evangelism, radio broadcasting, Bible studies in the homes, branch Sabbath schools, etc.

In this project library research was conducted to understand the Muslim mind and how it reacts to Christianity. Findings from this research will assist the writer to come

up with some ways to break down walls of prejudice and to begin friendly talk with the Muslims. Only then can evangelism begin in this church. Otherwise any effort to reach the Muslims would be a waste of time. A field study needs to be done to assess what the church has done in the past and to determine what methods could successfully be used in the future.

This project is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 is the introduction. Chapter 2 briefly traces the practice and theology of evangelism in the history of the Seventh-day Adventist Church down to the Indonesian Church in Azusa. This chapter shows why this church is doing what they are doing, and will assist the evangelist to develop a meaningful evangelistic program. Chapter 3 studies the Muslim mind and its reaction to Christianity. This chapter is crucial in this project which deals with evangelizing a people mostly of the Muslim faith. It discusses the antagonism between these two great religions, what Muslims think about Christians, and why. It also summarizes some of the major theological differences between the two faiths. Chapter 4 lists some suggestions and approaches worth trying in this church. Chapter 5 is the summary and conclusion.

CHAPTER 2

Historical Background

Evangelism--The Beginning of Seventh-day Adventism

Evangelism in the Indonesian-American Seventh-day Adventist Church follows the traditional orthodox pattern of the Seventh-day Adventist movement. To understand the philosophy of evangelism and to work out an evangelistic program in this church, one has to see the traditional understanding of evangelism in the Seventh-day Adventist Church and the methods used to achieve their goal. Members of this church should also be aware of their heritage as a strong evangelistic people. Most of the adult members of this church are first generation immigrants from Indonesia who are used to the way evangelism is being done in Indonesia and are not familiar with many of the methods used in this country.

The history of evangelism in the Seventh-day Adventist Church starts with the beginning of the movement itself. Throughout its history the church has never lost the enthusiastic spirit of evangelism with which it was conceived. Evangelism has been the heart throb of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. It is the force that has kept the church alive and moving forward.

The second advent message proclaimed by William Miller and his associates in the early 1830s was the immediate background of the Seventh-day Adventist people and church. The founders of the Seventh-day Adventist Church were believers and workers in the Second Advent movement started by William Miller. Conceived in this highly charged spirit of proclaiming the Gospel, the Seventh-day Adventist Church remains strongly evangelistic in all its enterprises.

In 1831 William Miller, a farmer of Low Hampton, New York, persuaded by fifteen years of intensive study of the Bible prophecies that the Advent of Christ was at hand, felt impelled to declare his views to the world. In the beginning he reached his conclusions on the soon coming of Christ from the study of the Bible alone. L.E. Froom, a distinguished writer in the Seventh-day Adventist Church, said that he laid "aside all commentaries and preconceived opinions, . . . he devoted two entire years to intensive study of its sacred pages."¹

At that time very little was heard from pulpit or press about the second coming of Christ. The general impression was that it must be preceded by the conversion of the world and the millenium, a long period of holiness and peace. As a result of his study of prophetic chronology, Miller believed not only that the advent was at hand, but that its

¹Le Roy E. Froom, The Prophetic Faith of Our Fathers (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Pub. Assoc., 1954), 462.

date might be fixed with some definiteness. Focusing on Daniel 8:13,14, he understood the "cleansing of the sanctuary" to be the second coming of Christ to cleanse this world. Six months before Miller's first public address we find in his letter to one of his close friends this summary statement on his findings and conviction,²

The 1st proof we have, as it respects Christ's 2nd coming as to time, is Dan'l, 8.14. "unto 2300 days; then shall the sanctuary be cleansed"--by days we are to understand years, sanctuary we understand the church; cleansed we may reasonably suppose means that complete redemption from sin, both soul and body, after the resurrection, when Christ comes the 2nd time "Without sin unto salvation."³

At first his mind was filled with mixed emotions about his findings. He was almost stunned by his conclusions; they had not been anticipated yet they seemed inevitable. Could they be true? Here is Miller's summarizing statement:

I commenced their study with no expectation of finding the time of the Saviour's coming, and I could at first hardly believe the result to which I had arrived; but the evidence struck me with such force that I could not resist my convictions. I became nearly settled in my conclusions, and began to wait, and watch, and pray for my Saviour's coming.⁴

If his conclusions on prophecy were sound and such

²Froom, 479

³William Miller, A Few Evidences of the Time of the 2nd Coming of Christ to Elder Andrews by Wm. Miller (n.p.: np, 1831), 1, as quoted in Froom, 479.

⁴William Miller, Wm. Miller's Apology and Defence (Boston: J.V. Himes, 1854), 12

great events were actually due within a short space of time, it was obviously important that the world should know about it.

At first he was reluctant to publicly proclaim his faith. He gathered all the excuses that he could think of--about his age, not being a preacher, his lack of training, want of ability, slowness of speech, etc. But none of them, or all of them together, could stop his conviction that it is his duty to share his faith with others publicly.⁵ For several years Miller continued to tell others of his faith in the imminent coming of Christ by writing it to ministers and friends. But the conviction that he must go and tell the world of its coming danger grew stronger in his heart. He felt that the blood of others would be required of him if he warned them not.

The public labors of Mr. Miller began in the autumn of 1831 when he accepted an invitation to go to Dresden, New York, to speak in a Baptist church, during the absence of their minister, on the subject of the Lord's return. He was fifty years old by this time. This first lecture must have impressed his listeners, because they wanted to hear more. The week long lectures turned into revival meetings which resulted in a number who had grown cold being converted again; and active members confessed their sins and sought to

⁵Froom, 482.

get ready to meet their returning Lord.⁶

Their evangelistic work drew thousands of people who left their various churches and joined what became to be known as the Advent Movement.

Joshua V. Himes, former minister of the First Christian Church of Boston, summarized the results of Miller's preaching:

Through his preaching, infidelity was made to yield its iron grip on hundreds of minds, Deism was forced to confess the truth of the Inspired Word, and the sandy foundations of Universalism were shaken whenever men were persuaded to attend Miller's whole course of lectures. And hundreds of sound, independent thinkers came to have an experimental knowledge of the blended justice and mercy of God and the sacrifice of Jesus Christ.⁷

Little did Miller realize that this small beginning at Dresden would soon swell into an amazing movement for the time. Estimates of his followers ran from a minimum of fifty thousand to a million. A common estimate by the Millerites was fifty thousand to one hundred thousand. These were the loyal core. McMaster's American history cites a top figure of one million adherents.⁸

In the beginning, the Adventist movement was wholly

⁶Froom, 486.

⁷Joshua V. Himes, Views of the Prophecies and Prophetic Chronology, Selected from Manuscripts of William Miller with a Memoir of His Life (Boston: Dow & Jackson's Press, 1842), 12-13.

⁸John Bach McMaster, A History of the People of the United States: From the Revolution to the Civil War, vol. 7 (New York: Appleton, 1913), 136.

within the existing churches, and there was no attempt to establish a separate denomination. In the earlier years of his public ministry, Miller had taken for granted that the churches at large would welcome the neglected good news of the soon coming Christ which had become so precious in his soul. He had supposed that when it was brought to their attention, this good news would be accepted with joy, and that preachers everywhere would proclaim it gladly. Smaller neighboring churches had freely opened their doors to him, and their ministers supported him. His early conviction of ultimate acceptance of the advent truth deepened. Under such circumstances Miller had never thought of forming a separate sect. However, he and his associates came increasingly to be charged with being schismatic, covenant breakers, and disorganizers. This they steadily denied. The joy of the glorious coming had broken down sectarianism and variance within their own hearts, and all Adventist groups were drawn together by this common bond.⁹

In the "Declaration of Principles," by the Adventists assembled in Boston, we find the following statement:

Our sole object in this enterprise, is to spread abroad the knowledge of the truth that the kingdom of God will shortly come, . . . and to endeavor, by the blessing of God, to arouse the church and the world to a sense of the nearness of that event,

As adventists we meet on common ground, and accord to all what we claim for ourselves, the right of individual opinion on all question of denomina-

⁹Froom, 761

tional interest, We ask none to lay aside their own views on doctrinal points, nor wish to give prominence to the sectarian belief of any.¹⁰

The Millerites repeatedly asserted that they had no intentions of building up another sect. They desired to strengthen the Christian bodies in the hope of, and preparation for, the soon coming advent, and to leave believers in peace and love in the congregations with which they were connected. But many of the churches became more and more unwilling to hear their message and started strong opposition against them. The doors of the churches soon closed against them, and every effort was made to prevent the spread of the advent doctrine. The advent message was increasingly looked upon as a heresy and regarded as a new and subversive doctrine. Leaders of various church groups began to challenge the Adventist lecturers, and resolutions were passed putting the ban on Adventist teaching. Credentials were taken away and ministers discharged.

The Millerites then came to believe that Protestantism at large had reversed the cherished position of three centuries with regard to the second advent and understanding of the times. They believed it was the most fateful step backwards ever taken by modern Protestantism. It had turned away from the light of prophecy and was stumbling in the dark, just as the Jews of old, at the first advent, rejected

¹⁰ "Declaration of Principles," The Signs of the Times, 7 June, 1843: 107-108.

Old Testament prophecies concerning the first advent. And as a result, they had fallen as a people from their high estate. The fact that Rome alone does not exhaust the intent of "Babylon" came to be increasingly, though reluctantly, believed.¹¹

The application of "Babylon" and other prophetic symbols at least in part to Protestantism did not originate in Millerism, but was a larger established concept. David Simpson of England, an Anglican and champion of religious liberty for dissenters, wrote in 1801:

I strongly suspect, that though the Pope and the church of Rome may be, and certainly are at the head of the grand 1260 years delusion, yet all other churches, of whatever denomination, whether established, or tolerated, or persecuted, which partake of the same spirit, or have instituted doctrines and ceremonies inimical to the pure and unadulterated Gospel of Christ, shall sooner or later share in the fate of that immense fabric of human ordinance.¹²

He finds among Protestant establishments the "daughter of the mother Babylon".

These (abuses), and some other matters, which might be brought forward more at large, seem, to many very well informed and respectable persons, truly objectionable, and strong indications that we are not so far removed from the old meretricious lady of Babylon, as we would willingly have the world to believe. Among the several Protestant establishments, we (the Church of England) must, they fear, be, at least, considered as the eldest daughter of that first-born of wickedness.¹³

¹¹Froom, 767

¹²David Simpson, A Plea for Religion (London: n.p., 1807), 188.

¹³Simpson, 211-212

He, therefore, applies the warnings against the beast, image, and mark to Protestantism as well as to Rome.

We Protestants too read them, and make ourselves easy under the awful denunciation, by applying them exclusively to the church of Rome, never dreaming that they are, at least, in a secured sense equally applicable, not only to the English, but to every church establishment in Christendom, which retains any of the marks of the beast.¹⁴

Samuel Hopkins (1721-1803), noted Congregational theologian, had also said that the Protestant churches were not yet wholly reformed, that few churches or individuals have come far enough out of Rome, "the mother of all the false doctrines, superstition, infidelity, and abominable practices in the Protestant world."¹⁵

The Millerites came to see that Protestant churches resembled the papal churches in doctrine, practice, repression, state support, and, thus, might be identified in some degree with Mother Babylon. Therefore, Revelation 18:4 to "Come out of Babylon," was applied to Protestant churches. This point is very important in understanding the basic theology in Seventh-day Adventist evangelism. Miller himself did not sound this call at first, but in 1844 he wrote that the "churches that came out of Rome the mother may as

¹⁴Simpson, 439

¹⁵Samuel Hopkins, Treatise on the Millenium in Works, vol. 2 (Boston: Isaiah Thomas, 1793), 328-329.

well bear the name of her daughters."¹⁶ Thus it was that at last the cry was given, "Come out of her my people"--come out from the confusion and division, the sects and parties, the worldliness, pride, the covetousness of nominal Christendom. God's people should not remain in the fellowship of those churches that were definitely fighting and rejecting the advent doctrine. They felt that they should return to the faith of the primitive church.

Basic Concepts and Practices in
Seventh-day Adventist Evangelism

This bird's-eye view of the early beginnings of the Seventh-day Adventist movement will assist in the understanding of their theology of evangelism. Seventh-day Adventists share with other Christian churches the basic motives for evangelism. They evangelize because of the love of God and the love for humanity. They evangelize because Jesus commanded them to go into all the world and preach the Gospel. They evangelize because Christ, who told them to go, will soon come again to reward the righteous and punish the wicked. The difference in Seventh-day Adventist evangelism is perhaps only a matter of emphasis.

The love of God is the basis of all evangelism. It is this unselfish love demonstrated by the giving of His only Son which becomes the subject of the good news of salvation

¹⁶William Miller, Remarks on Revelation Thirteenth, Seventeenth, and Eighteenth (Boston: J.V. Himes, 1844), 19-20.

to be proclaimed to all men. This same power is also the power that draws men to Himself. God uses human agencies to reach humanity. God's people on earth who have been drawn by His love, now filled with His constraining love, are to draw others to God. Every born-again Christian is an evangelist.

The love of man for his fellow man doomed to destruction is a strong motivation for evangelism. This love is God given, and, cannot be separated from God's love working in him. Knowing that many are heading to eternal death, how can one remain silent when he can be an instrumentality of God to help them find the way of life. Seventh-day Adventists are constantly reminded that they are responsible for the salvation of the people within their reach.

Furthermore, they believe that Christ has explicitly given them the command to proclaim the Gospel in the Great Commission, as found in Mark 16:15, "Go ye into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature." This command of Jesus is taken very seriously by Seventh-day Adventists. They feel it is their sacred responsibility to be involved in the proclamation of the Gospel. It is a duty which comes with accepting Christ. Seventh-day Adventist preachers frequently remind their members that they are held accountable for the blood of the unsaved.¹⁷

¹⁷Ezekiel 33:7-9

Evangelism is not the work of the minister, the evangelist, or just the preachers, but of each and every church member. One of the baptismal vows in order to be accepted to church membership is to be prepared "to meet Him in peace, as well as to help others to get ready for His glorious appearing."¹⁸

The ultimate goal in each department of the church is evangelism. Every aspect of church work is geared toward the proclamation of the Word. Evangelism is the main purpose of their hundreds of educational institutions around the globe, from elementary schools to colleges and universities.

Down to the local church level, evangelism is the heart-throb of the life of the church. Each department of the local church has evangelism as its goal. Every member is recruited to voluntarily do some type of missionary work. Number 26 of 27 items in the doctrinal instructions for baptismal candidates states:

Every church member is under sacred command from Jesus to use his talents in personal soul winning work in helping to give the gospel to all the world. When this work is finished Jesus will come. (Matt. 25:14-29; 28:18-20; Rev. 22:17; Isa. 43:10-12; 2 Cor. 5:17-20; Rom. 10:13-15; Matt. 24:14).¹⁹

Also, number 9 of 13 baptismal vows asks:

Is the soon coming of Jesus the blessed hope in

¹⁸ Adventist Church Manual, 62.

¹⁹ Adventist Church Manual, 60

your heart, and is it your settled determination to prepare to meet Him in peace, as well as to help others to get ready for His glorious appearing?²⁰

In the local churches every function of the minister is geared toward the purpose of hastening the second coming of Jesus. In the Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia, quoting from Manual for Ministers (1942), it states:

The Manual (pages 7, 8) stresses that the ministers' first work is soul winning: Ministers for God first and foremost are to be winners of souls. This is their primary work . . . To win souls to the kingdom of God must be the first consideration. With sorrow for sin and with patient love, they must work as Christ worked, putting forth determined, unceasing effort.²¹

Putting into focus what have been discussed on the history of Seventh-day Adventist evangelism, basic concepts of evangelism, and statements from Seventh-day Adventist publications just quoted above, we conclude that Seventh-day Adventists understand evangelism essentially as a God given duty of all His disciples to present the Gospel of Jesus Christ to the world in such a way as to win their loyalty to Him. It is a task of helping others to get ready for Christ's glorious appearing.

This definition of evangelism is essentially what is generally understood of evangelism as could be seen in the following quotations of some Christian scholars.

²⁰ Adventist Church Manual, 62

²¹ Don F. Neufeld, ed., Seventh-day Adventist Encyclopedia (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Pub. Assoc., 1976), 900.

Donald T. Kauffman in his book The Dictionary of Religious Terms defines evangelism as "proclaiming the good news of Jesus Christ with the intention of winning disciples for Him and the Church."²²

Professor John C. Bennet defines evangelism as follows:

I should define evangelism as any form of witness or teaching which has as its aim the bringing of persons to commitment or to recommitment to God as known through Christ.²³

Henry Sloane Coffin, former President of Union Theological Seminary, New York, defines evangelism by this quotation:

Evangelism should be defined as the presentation of the Gospel of Christ in such wise as to win immediate loyalty to Him as Saviour and Lord both of the individual and human society.²⁴

E. W. Wallace, former president of Victoria University, Canada, describes his understanding of evangelism as follows:

My conception of evangelism is the presentation of God as He is revealed in Jesus Christ in such a way that His grace may win men to complete trust in Him and commitment of life to Him.²⁵

Evangelism is so heavily emphasized that it has a

²²Donald T. Kauffman, The Dictionary of Religious Terms (London: Marshall, Morgan & Scott, 1967), 1977.

²³John R. Mott, Evangelism for the World Today (London: International Missionary Council, 1938), 86.

²⁴Mott, 89.

²⁵Mott, 104.

tremendous effect on the daily lives of the church members. In building a house, for example, a church member would ask the question: "Do I need a house that would last for 50 years when I know that Jesus is coming soon?" From the financial point of view he would ask, "How much money would I put in the building of this house and how much in the church evangelistic funds?" A member would have a guilty feeling toward society, the church, and God, if he had a one hour conversation with a stranger in a bus without mentioning anything about the soon coming of Jesus and the need to be ready. Everyone is preoccupied with getting ready to meet Jesus when he comes, and with helping others to be ready.

The Second Advent and the Judgment

The belief that at Christ's second coming He will bring judgment to all people according to his work is another great motivation for evangelism in the Seventh-day Adventist church. Having the Great Commission of Christ and the conviction that He is coming soon to this earth to take His people into His glorious kingdom, we get a church militant in evangelistic work. The second advent of Christ is believed to fix the destinies of both the righteous and the wicked. Christians cannot remain silent while the world is rolling toward its imminent doom.

When Christ's command to go into all the world and preach the Gospel to every creature is put together with His

prediction that "this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come,"²⁶ we can see how the end of the world, the second advent of Christ, is somehow dependent upon the preaching of the Gospel. Therefore, doing evangelistic work means the hastening of the coming of Jesus. This is what the apostle Peter said. Writing on the subject of the end of the world, he exhorted God's people to holiness and godliness while "waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God."²⁷ The opposite is also true: indolence in evangelism delays Christ's second coming. One of the joys in heaven is to hear somebody say, "It was you who invited me here." On the other hand, God's people are accountable for the lost ones who otherwise could have been saved had they not been indolent in their evangelistic work.

The Imminence of Christ's Second Coming

This concept of the imminence of Christ's second coming lends added impetus to Seventh-day Adventist evangelism. Both Bible prophecy and the signs of the times have convinced them that His coming is "even at the door." This theme has been ringing from Seventh-day Adventist pulpits for more than a century and has frequently drawn ridicule upon themselves for Christ has not come. They are not set-

²⁶Matthew 24:14.

²⁷2 Peter 3:12.

ting any time for Christ's return as their predecessors did, for "that day and hour knoweth no man."²⁸ Their belief that there is no more probation after death makes the imminence of Christ's coming as close as death itself. "Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh."²⁹

Content of Evangelism

There is only one life to live and it is in this life that we determine our eternal destinies. God's people on earth have to be ready to meet Jesus at all times, because their final destiny is determined by the spiritual condition at the time life ends. They also have the responsibility of warning others of this determinative factor and helping them prepare to meet the soon coming Lord. Hence, the content of evangelism is salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and a strong appeal to be ready for His coming.

Evangelism, then, is both the proclamation of the Gospel to the world and an appeal to be ready for Christ's coming. Many professed Christians are not living the kind of lives ready to be translated when He comes. Hence, evangelism is directed to non-Christians and Christians alike. That is why, in the opinion of this writer, evangelism must include Biblical truths which are not generally accepted by

²⁸ Matthew 24:36.

²⁹ Matthew 24:44.

other Christian churches, such as, the seventh-day Sabbath, the unconscious state of the dead, clean and unclean meats, the millenium, etc.

"Sheep-Stealers"

Seventh-day Adventists have frequently been accused of proselytizing Christians. Seventh-day Adventist evangelism, they say, is not the proclamation of the Gospel to the unreached, but frequently is aimed at other Christian groups. They work among those who are already in the fold to gain more membership. Seventh-day Adventists accept this accusation. They believe that this is what Christ wants them to do. A leading Seventh-day Adventist writer, F. D. Nichol, replies to this charge as follows:

To this charge we plead "guilty," for the dictionary says that to proselyze is "to win over a different opinion, belief, sect, or party," and that is our work. Christ Himself gave us that work in His command, "Go ye therefore, and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them." Matt. 28:19, Everywhere we find men and women holding un-Scriptural beliefs Where would the world be today if Luther and Calvin and others of the Reformers had not gone about preaching to men to turn from their former views on religion--proselyting them? Our task is to complete the work of these Reformers, and we are happy to follow their example and adopt their methods.³⁰

The word "proselytism" has been understood in both the positive and the negative sense. As originally used in the New Testament this word means a convert to Judaism from

³⁰Frances D. Nichol, Answers to Objections (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Pub. Assoc., 1952), 428.

among the Gentiles.³¹ This was what Christ wanted his disciples to do when He told them to go and make disciples of all nations. Therefore the English word to proselyte is defined as "to win over a different opinion, belief, sect, or party" as quoted above. This is proselytizing used in the good sense of the word which in actuality is the desired result of evangelism.

When used in the negative sense it denotes the use of un-Christian ways and means of inducing the adherence of others to a Church. One such definition is made by the World Council of Churches in the following quotation:

PROSELYTISM. Here is meant improper attitudes and behaviour in the practice of Christian witness. Proselytism embraces whatever violates the right of the human person, Christian or non-Christian, to be free from external coercion in religious matters, or whatever, in the proclamation of the Gospel, does not conform to the ways God draws free men to himself in response to his calls to serve in spirit and in truth.³²

Seventh-day Adventist Evangelism in Indonesia

Over ninety percent of the adult members of the Azusa Indonesian-American church are first generation immigrants who do not easily adjust to their newly adopted country. Language, economic, and cultural barriers, along with the color of skin, are some of the many problems faced by these

³¹Siegfried H. Horn, Seventh-day Adventist Bible Dictionary (Washington, D.C.: Review & Herald Pub. Assoc., 1979), 908.

³²World Council of Churches, So Much in Common (Geneva: WCC, 1973), 82.

immigrants, and have forced them to huddle together into an ethnic group where they can do things together the way they did back home. This is also true in their evangelistic work. As evangelistic methods change through the years, these Indonesians feel more comfortable with old methods used so effectively back home in working for fellow Indonesians in California.

The small beginning of Seventh-day Adventism started by William Miller rapidly swelled into a great movement sending missionaries around the world. It reached half way around the globe to the shores of Indonesia from Europe and Australia, where Seventh-day Adventist work has been well established.

Various ways were used by these missionaries to proclaim the Gospel to the natives. They started health clinics, language schools, religious literature, etc. as entering wedges. The most commonly used method is the same one used by the early pioneers in the United States, the public evangelistic campaigns. In Indonesia the use of a large tent or a church building for this purpose is commonplace even today. Before the advent of radio and television evangelism, this has been the most popular means of the proclamation of the Gospel. Undoubtedly, many of the members of this church have joined the Seventh-day Adventist church through one of these meetings, and many have actively participated in promoting such work. Many members still

like to see this type of evangelistic meeting held in their church, even though the days of such campaigns are over.

Such an evangelistic campaign is a major event in the church calendar. Detailed preparations are made long before the meetings begin, with various working committees formed. Every member is ready to lend a helping hand in whatever capacity he can be of help. Young and old pitch in; even the children prepare some kind of programs. This is one time when each member has an opportunity to actually participate in the proclamation of the Gospel.

Besides having a part in the preaching of the Gospel, these types of meetings very effectively serve as a spiritual revival for the members. Their understanding of Scriptures is deepened, their dedication to the Lord renewed, church attendance increases and so do the tithes and offerings. Another interesting bi-product of such evangelistic meetings favored best by the youth of the church is an increase in socialization. Usually when an evangelistic campaign is held, neighboring churches also participate actively, which offers an opportunity for the young people to make more acquaintances. Last, but not least, is the joy that members experiences in seeing sinners saved by grace. Coming to the United States, these Indonesians feel there is something missing in their church experience when such evangelistic programs are not used.

There is, however, a serious disadvantage in the use of

such evangelistic campaigns to the early missionaries as well as today--it is not effective with the Moslem population. A Muslim would not usually come to Christian religious meetings, just as a Christian would not usually attend a Muslim religious meeting. Various methods of evangelizing the Muslims have been used with minimal success: books and pamphlets were published, schools and health clinics opened, language schools and social gatherings held. However, minimal success is not discouraging, considering other Muslim countries where Seventh-day Adventist evangelism is practically nil. Evangelistic methods commonly used for Christian audiences are not effective in reaching the Muslims. Programs have to be drastically redesigned in order to gain Muslims' attention.

The Indonesian-American Seventh-day Adventist Church

In the early 1970s, a few Dutch-Indonesian Seventh-day Adventists got together and felt that if they had met each Saturday for worship and Bible study they would have had a more meaningful experience and Christian fellowship. Coming from the same ethnic background, speaking the same language, they felt more comfortable and more at ease with each other. Discussions on Biblical and spiritual matters would be more meaningful, and an evangelistic outreach would be more successful among their fellow countrymen/women.

The person who started this group, Pastor Paul Sitompul, happened to be a native Indonesian. The designation

"native" is scarcely used, and is used here to make the distinction from the Dutch-Indonesians. This distinction has to be made in order to better understand the problems in the evangelistic work of this church.

The Dutch-Indonesians are a product of interracial marriages between the Dutch and the Indonesian people during the 350 years of Dutch colonial rule of the country. Even after the two countries have developed good political relationships, deep-seated ill feelings linger. The ruling Dutch left Indonesia, along with the Allied forces during World War II, when Japanese invaders forced them out. Many of the Dutch-Indonesians, however, remained in the country until a few years after Indonesia obtained its independence and gained more political power. Then they were deported.

A large number of them finally settled in California. Because their looks and complexions are typically Caucasian, they had no difficulty at all in integrating into the mainstream population. Holding key positions back in Indonesia, they did not have much problem obtaining jobs in this country. They have the education, the know-how and the experience. They are not at all a food stamp people. Being the colonialists in Indonesia, these Indonesian-born Hollanders (ethnically a mixture of Indonesian and Dutch blood) joined easily with the Caucasians of the United States in maintaining the superiority of the whites and consider their native Indonesian brothers inferior. This fact they may not

admit or they may even deny, especially within church circles.

This racist sentiment is also prevalent in the Azusa Indonesian-American Church. When this church was started, the original intention was to include all Indonesians. During the first five years or so, more than ninety percent of the membership were Dutch-Indonesians. This was because there were only a few Chinese and native Indonesian Seventh-day Adventists in the United States at that time. During the last ten years, however, hundreds of native Indonesians have moved to California as immigrants or as students, and have joined this church. It is interesting to notice that as the native Indonesians gradually began to increase in number in the church, the Dutch-Indonesians gradually began to disappear, and, today, they are almost totally gone and have merged into white churches. Today there is only one Dutch-Indonesian family which occasionally attends this church. A second Indonesian Seventh-day Adventist Church was later formed in the Riverside area and not a single member is a Dutch-Indonesian. No problems were created; as more and more native Indonesians joined the church, the Dutch-Indonesians simply quietly slipped out and joined other white churches.

The membership growth of this church is not from their soul winning activities, which should be the case, but from newcomers from Indonesia. This could mean only one thing:

that they are not doing well in their evangelistic outreach. To be sure, they are very active in their evangelistic work, but the effectiveness of the evangelism is another question. On the other hand, the rapid growth of church membership seems to indicate that their active evangelistic program has brought some good results, at least from the Conference point of view, which in actuality is not the case.

Another very important reason for the failure of the Church's evangelistic effort has to do with the transition from the Dutch-Indonesian to the native Indonesian membership of this church as discussed above. This reason is especially important at this time, because it bears upon the timeliness of this project with its emphasis on Muslim evangelization. It is now the right time for this church to redirect its evangelistic program to include Muslim friends and relatives. This paper would have been meaningless if written before this transition took place. Now that the membership of this church is practically one hundred percent native Indonesians, and the word "Dutch" was dropped out of their name early in 1987, it is time to plan a strong evangelistic program that would include the Muslims. This calls for preparing and educating the members of this church in understanding the Muslims, which is the purpose of the following chapter.

CHAPTER 3

Understanding the Muslim Mind

Materials in this chapter could very well be used in the lay evangelism class in this church. In fact, every member should be familiar with the basic concepts of Islam in order to better understand and communicate with their Muslim friends and relatives with whom they frequently come in contact and with whom they wish to share their faith in Jesus.

How could one interest a Muslim in Christianity without knowing his ideas about religion? Approaching them in a wrong way, about the question of God, for example, would at once turn them away from you. That is why it is very important that a lay evangelist should learn some of the basic ideas about Islam. Except for two families with a Muslim background, members of this church do not know what Islam is all about. Since the majority of people they wish to evangelize are Muslims, this chapter has a very important place in their evangelistic program.

This chapter is divided into three parts. Part one gives a brief historical background of Islam; part two discusses its basic beliefs and practices; and part three is a summary of some important points of conflict between Muslim

and Christian theology.

Historical Background of Islam

What is Islam?

Muslims call their religion Islam. Westerners call it Mohammedanism. In Indonesia, the designation Mohammedan is not used for followers of the prophet Muhammad; they are known as Muslimin, that is, those who are submitted. Muslim is an Arabic word meaning submission to God.¹ The Muslim attitude is well expressed in this verse of the Qur'an, "And who hath a better religion than he who resigneth [submit] himself to God, who doeth what is good, and followeth the faith of Abraham in all sincerity?"²

The name Islam has another use. It also applies to the community of believers. Islam is not only a religious but also a political, social, economic, educational and judicial system. It is a way of life.

Islam is the latest of all great world religions. it came later than Judaism, Buddhism or Christianity, but it spread more rapidly than any one of them. In only one hundred years it had built an empire reaching from Spain and North Africa to India. Today the world of Islam consists of 800 million people distributed all around the globe, and is second in population only to Christianity in the world's

¹Hammadah Abdalati, Islam in Focus (Indianapolis: American Trust Pub., 1977), 7.

²Qur'an, Sura 4:124.

great religions.³

The Rise of Islam

It began in the seventh century after Christ with the ministry of its founder, Muhammad, who was born at Mecca in Arabia in the year A.D. 570.⁴ At the time of his birth the population of Arabia was composed of nomadic tribes and warring Bedcuin tribes. This pre-Islamic age in Arabia is known in Islam as the "Times of Ignorance," when the majority of these desert nomads were pagans. Their religion was primitive, believing in one Supreme God with many lesser deities.⁵ There were many idols, traditionally 360 of them, one for each day of the lunar year. Many superstitions were practiced as well. Also, some of its towns had scattered groups of Jews and Christians. There seems to have been little spiritual life in the Christian church of that day, and little effort to convert the pagan tribes.

Muhammad was obviously exposed to some Jewish and Christian teaching at an early age. Christianity was at a low ebb when he knew it. He was a very religious person and when married to a wealthy widow, Khadijah, he had time for

³George C. Fry and James R. King, Islam, A Survey of the Muslim Faith (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 20.

⁴E.W. Bethmann, Bridge to Islam (Nashville: Southern Pub. Assoc., 1950), 33.

⁵Frederick M. Denny, An Introduction to Islam (New York: Mcmillan Pub. Co., 1985), 56.

thought and meditation. Finally, in a vision received in a cave at Hira, he felt himself called to be a prophet of the one true God, known in Arabic as Allah.⁶ Muhammad felt the burden to warn the Arabs about the coming judgment day and to bring them into obedience and submission to Allah, in order to escape his anger. He must have learned much from the Jews and the Christians, for when he began his public preaching as a prophet in Mecca he voiced the belief in one God, whom he identified with the God of the Jews and Christians. To him Allah was the only true God, and the worship of all other divinities was idolatry.⁷ He met much opposition and persecution in Mecca, but he was welcomed at Medina, a nearby town. The flight to Medina, in A.D. 622, called the Hijira, is considered to be "year one" in the Islamic calendar.⁸ At first Muhammad had simply been a religious leader who preached the unity of Allah and warned of the Day of Judgment. At Medina his movement grew rapidly and he became not only the spiritual head of a new faith, but also a legislator and a military leader. At the time of his death in 632, Muhammad had succeeded in creating a religious force which included the economic, cultural and

⁶Fry and King, 41.

⁷Fry and King, 47, 48.

⁸Bethmann, 33.

political structure of everyday life.⁹ Since he left no son, in the years following his death, the succeeding Caliphs expanded Islam across North Africa and into southern Europe. By 644 the Muslim world extended from North Africa to India.

Islam in Indonesia

When Portugese traders brought Christianity to Indonesia at the beginning of the sixteenth century, Islam had already established its strongholds in various places in Indonesia. As early as the end of the thirteenth century, there was a Mohammedan kingdom in Sumatra, which shows that Muslim traders must have entered the islands much earlier, as we will see in the following quotation. The reports of Marco Polo were the earliest reliable information concerning Islam in Indonesia. Addison said that when Marco Polo stopped by Perlak, Indonesia, in 1292, he found that the city had been converted to Islam.

The earliest reliable information concerning Islam in Indonesia is found in Marco Polo's report that, when returning to Venice in 692 (A.D. 1292) after his years in the service of Kublai Khan in China, he stopped at Perlak on the north coast of Sumatra and found that that city had been converted to Islam by "Saracene" merchants. In the neighboring principalities, according to his account, the population was made up of wild heathen.¹⁰

Peaceful persuasion exerted by Muslim traders in the course

⁹ Denny, 80.

¹⁰ A.T. Addison, The Christian Approach to the Moslem (New York: AMS Press, 1966), 233.

of many centuries has been the cause for the spread of Islam in Indonesia. Sir Thomas Arnold observed:

It is to the proselytizing efforts of these Arab and Indian merchants that the native Mohammedan population, which we find already in the earliest historical notices of Islam in these parts, owes its existence In every instance, in the beginning, their work had to be carried on without patronage or assistance from the rulers of the country, but solely by the force of persuasion, and in many cases in the face of severe oppositions.¹¹

Gottfried Simon noted three reasons for the rapid spread of Islam among the pagans in Indonesia. By observing them it is possible to note the methods employed, the motives for conversion and to estimate the effects of the religion upon the natives.

The first reason is magic. Fighting the evil spirits which they believe to be the cause of poverty, diseases, death and natural calamities has always been a problem with the primitive natives. Someone who comes and offers supernatural powers that promise to ward off these spirits and bring prosperity would be greatly welcomed. Simon observed that among the Batak people, natives of Sumatra, the largest island in Indonesia:

Teachers of magic are much sought after, . . . This ilmu to a great extent acts as a compensation for certain sacrifices demanded of them by Islam, especially the renunciation of swine's flesh. The Muslims declare that ilmu is a special gift of the grace of God to the faithful, granted by the intercession of Muhammad, to make the heathen to un-

¹¹ Sir Thomas Arnold, The Preaching of Islam, 2nd ed. (London: n.p., 1913), 365.

derstand that Islam is truly sent of God. The fact that Christians are without these gifts of magic is a clear proof that they are not objects of divine favor.¹²

Addison states that this is responsible for the massive conversions from paganism to Mohammedanism.

From the standpoint of the heathen animist, then, the Moslem shows every sign of enjoying prosperity and success The followers of the Prophet not only possess all earthly advantages. They likewise control all the mysterious forces of the unseen world. It is easy to see, therefore, why the natives of the Indies, responding to all these incentives, should so long have been turning by the tens of thousands to Islam.¹³

Secondly, is the accomodation of Islam to paganism.

Upon becoming a Mohammedan, the pagans take with them their entire doctrine of spirits and sacrifices without being hindered. Simon observed that

. . . in Sumatra the people have kept to the places of pilgrimage which they used to visit in the pagan period, only bestowing on them Moham-medan names. . . . The first generation of Moslems without hesitation, on entering the Moslem faith, take with them their entire doctrine of spirits and sacrifices, nor does anybody put an hindrance in their way. The same person who acted as medium in connection with the spirits of the pagan times, now acts in connection with the Moslem magicians.
14

The Muslims were ready to compromise the doctrines and practices of their faith as needed to recommend it to the people they wished to attract. Sir Thomas Arnold wrote:

¹²Samuel M. Zwemer, ed. The Mohammedan World of Today (New York: Revel, 1906), 218-219.

¹³Addison, 237.

¹⁴Zwemer, 219-220.

Instead of holding themselves apart in proud isolation, they gradually melted into the mass of the population, employing all their superiority of intelligence and civilization for the work of conversion and making such skillful compromises in the doctrines and practices of their faith as were needed to recommend it to the people they wished to attract.¹⁵

A third reason given by Simon for the rapid spread of Islam among the pagans of Indonesia are the features common among the pagans which favor the Mohammedan propaganda: the belief about the being who is good, just, and omnipotent; the doctrine of another life; the unity of God, fate, and the Day of Judgment.¹⁶ To the pagan these concepts were vague and distorted, and it was easy for the Mohammedans to accommodate their doctrines to pagan concepts.

This type of Indonesian mentality provides fertile soil for Sufism or mysticism in the modern Islam of Indonesia. A noted Muslim scholar in Indonesia wrote the following:

Sufism, or mysticism, and particularly pantheistic mysticism, found fertile soil in Indonesian spiritual and emotional life from the very beginning because of the nature of the Indonesian mind and because of the age-old influence of Hinduism and Buddhism. Moreover, Islam was introduced in Indonesia by Indians.¹⁷

P.A. Djajadiningrat further tells us that this trend is still prevalent, even among political leaders and intellec-

¹⁵Arnold, 405.

¹⁶Zwemer, 220-221.

¹⁷K.W. Morgan, ed., Islam: The Straight Path (New York: Ronald Press, 1958), 395.

tuals. He noted that

Nowadays even a political party is based on mystical principles. Even the people who do not belong to any Sufi order, chiefly the intellectuals, busy themselves with the study and practice of the science and discipline of the inner life, or mysticism.¹⁸

With the exception of some local areas where their religion is observed very strictly, like Aceh, Minangkabau, some areas in Kalimantan and South Celebes, the Muslims in Indonesia are nominal Muslims and, thus, are more susceptible to Christianity. Indonesian Muslims have been accepting Christianity at an amazing rate, compared to Muslims of other countries. It is estimated that over half of all converts from Islam are Indonesians.¹⁹

Indonesian Muslims who come to the United States are mostly students and businessmen, more of the liberal type, who are more ready to listen to the Gospel message. Leaving behind family and community ties, living in a Christian society, many of the fears of accepting Christianity are less threatening. Having no fear of being disclaimed by their families, or being ostracized by the community, or being boycotted in their businesses, it will be much easier for them to accept Christ.

An Arab proverb says, "In a country where nobody knows

¹⁸Morgan, 402.

¹⁹Don M. McCurry, "A Muslim World Overview," American Festival Manuscript, 28 July 1981.

you, you can do as you wish." Only when Muslims are outside their country are they freed from the restraints of their religion and society. Christian evangelists have to take advantage of this opportunity, because a Muslim going back to his country can be a powerful Christian witness.

Faith and Practice of Islam

This section briefly discusses the beliefs and practices of Islam that have united Muslims in all parts of the world. A summary of the fundamental formulas of faith of Islam will help in understanding the Muslim mind. The three things included in this section are: the Muslim Creed (iman), the Pillars of Islam (din) and the Qur'an.

The Creed (Iman)

There are six fundamental articles of faith that must be held by every Muslim: 1) the only God (Allah), 2) his angels (malaikatuhu), 3) his books (kutubuhu), 4) his apostles (rasuluhu), 5) the Day of Judgment (el-yaum, el-akhir) and 6) determinism (qadr, qada).²⁰

The Only God (Allah). Muhammad's fanatical belief that God is one has made the Muslims justly proud of the fact that Islam has overcome idolatry in many areas. According to Islam, Allah is unique in the absolute sense. Thus, any effort to attribute to Him a plurality of persons (the Christian doctrine of the Trinity) appears to a Muslim to be

²⁰Denny, 92.

shirk (polytheism, making someone co-equal with God), the only sin that God cannot forgive.²¹ However, since both Christian and Muslim faiths believe in One supreme sovereign creator God, this writer is of the opinion that they are referring to the same Being. In Indonesia there is no problem with the much disputed identification of the Christian God with the Muslim Allah, because Christians use the name Allah for God. Furthermore, in his work among Muslims in Indonesia, the writer has heard many Muslim converts testify that the only change is their understanding of God, but the Person remains the same. They do not have to switch gods.

God's Angels (malaikatuhu). Muslims believe angels are supernatural beings, created of light, whose important work are messengers and helpers of God.²² Hummadah Abdalati describes angels as

. . . purely spiritual and splendid beings whose nature requires no food or drink or sleep. They have no physical desires of any kind nor material needs. They spend their days and nights in the service of God. There are many of them, and each one is charged with a certain duty Belief in the angels originates from the Islamic principle that knowledge and truth are not entirely confined to the sensory knowledge or sensory perception alone.²³

Some angels are preachers of the truth and encourage

²¹ Denny, 93.

²² Denny, 93.

²³ Abdalati, 13.

believers with their good tidings of Paradise.²⁴ Others are angels who are registers of the deeds of human beings, preserving the records until the Day of Judgment when they are shown to man.²⁵ There is also a host of evil angels. These are followers of Iblis, or Satan, "who was cast out of heaven after he refused God's command to bow down to Adam" (Qur'an 7:11-18). Iblis has a great host of evil followers of angelic origin.²⁶

His Holy Books (kutubuhu). Besides the Qur'an, Muslims believe in the books written by Moses, the Pentateuch, the Psalms written by David, the books written by the prophets and the revelation given through Jesus as found in the Gospels. Notice how a Muslim writer explains the teaching of the Qur'an on the subject:

The Qur'an commands the Muslims thus: We believe in God, and the revelation given to us, and to Abraham, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob and the Tribes; and that which was given to Moses and Jesus, and that which was given to all prophets from their Lord. We make no discrimination between one and another of them, and we bow to God (2:136, cf. 3:84; 4:163-165; 6:84-87) In the Qur'an a special reference is made to the books of Abraham, Moses, David and Jesus.²⁷

The following are three Qur'anic verses which state that the Bible was sent down from God:

²⁴Sura, 41:31, 32.

²⁵Sura 82:10-12.

²⁶Denny, 93.

²⁷Abdalati, 12.

O ye who believe: believe in God and His apostle, and the Books which He hath sent down aforetime. Whosoever believeth not in God and His Angels and His Books and His Apostles, and in the last day, he verily hath erred with far gone error.²⁸

To the children of Israel gave we of old the Book and the Wisdom, and the gift of Prophecy.²⁹

We gave him [Jesus] the Gospel: . . . To thee we have sent down the Book [Qur'an] with truth, confirmatory of previous Scripture.³⁰

God's Apostles (rasuluhu). The fourth article of faith is belief in the prophets or apostles. Abdalati explains that

The true, faithful Muslim . . . believes in all the messengers of God without any discrimination among them. Every known nation had a warner or messenger from God The Holy Qur'an mentions the names of twenty-five of them, and the Muslim believes in them all and accepts them as authorized messengers of God Among them Muhammed stands as the last Messenger and the crowning glory of the foundation of prophethood.³¹

The Day of Judgment (el-yaum, el-akhir). The warning of the coming of the Day of Judgment is one of Muhammed's most important message in his early Meccan ministry. Notice what Bethmann discovered upon studying the sayings of Muhammed,

If we take time to study the sayings of Muhammed, we shall soon find that he had a message--a most important message--the message of the coming judgment of God. He felt the urge to carry this mes-

²⁸Sura 4:135.

²⁹Sura 45:15.

³⁰Sura 5:51, 52.

³¹Abdalati, 57, 58.

sage to his people, the Arabs in Mekka, in order to warn them and to arouse them to the fear of God, because the judgment drew nigh.³²

This is a very important element in the preaching of Muhammad, and holds an important place in the Qur'an. It is known also as the Day of Doom, the Last Day, the Day of Resurrection, the Day of Distinguishing and others.³³ The Qur'an teaches that what happened to a man on the Last Day, his reward or punishment, his pleasure or pain, is determined by what he has chosen to do in this world.

On the day when We shall summon all men with their record, whoso is given his book in his right hand--such will read their book and they will not be wronged or shred. Whoso is blind here will be blind in the Hereafter, and yet further from the road.³⁴

Thus the belief in the judgment of the Last Day is a strong motive for the man who seeks perfection and progress in this world, in order that he may be accepted and favored by Allah in the Other world. "People with good records will be generously rewarded and warmly welcomed to the Heaven of God, and those with bad records will be punished and cast into Hell."³⁵ Abdalati further explains that

If some people think that they are shrewd enough and can get away with their wrong doings, just as they sometimes escape the penalty of the mundane laws, they are wrong; they will not be caught

³²Bethmann, 26.

³³Denny, 95.

³⁴Sura 17:71, 72.

³⁵Abdalati, 13.

right on the Day of Judgment. They will be caught right on the spot defenseless, without any lawyer or counsel to stand in their behalf. All deeds are visible to God and counted by His agents.³⁶

Determinism or Predestination (qadr, qada). The doctrine of predestination has been much debated among Muslim circles. This is caused by the many passages in the Qur'an which state that man's course of life is mapped out beforehand; and also, there are as many passages which stress the personal responsibility of accepting God's message.³⁷ The following are only two Qur'anic passages which teach that everything that happens is fore-ordained by the unchangeable decrees of Allah.

And whom Allah shall please to guide, that man's breast will be open to Islam, but whom He shall please to mislead, straight and narrow will he make his breast. . . .³⁸

To Allah belongs what is in heaven and on earth. He forgives whom He pleases and punishes whom He pleases, for Allah is forgiving and merciful.³⁹

Passages like these in the Qur'an lead the Muslim to believe "the doctrine of predestination, the philosophy of total teleology, acceptance of destiny, and resignation to fate. It explains why the phrase ensh'allah, 'God willing,' is so common in the Muslim world."⁴⁰ The writer finds this

³⁶Abdalati, 13.

³⁷Bethmann, 74, 75.

³⁸Sura 6:125.

³⁹Sura 3:124.

⁴⁰Fry and King, 70.

fatalistic view of life prevalent among Muslims in Indonesia. Whatever happens in life, even the worst calamities, are accepted as the will of Allah.

Abdalati denies that this doctrine of God's predestination leads to fatalism. He explains,

This does not in any way make man fatalist or helpless. It simply draws the demarcation line between what is God's concern and what is man's responsibility. Because we are by nature finite and limited, we have a finite and limited degree of power and freedom. We cannot do everything, and He graciously holds us responsible only for the things we do. The things which we cannot do, or things which He Himself does, are not in the realm of our responsibility.⁴¹

The following are two Qur'anic passages that stress the personal responsibility of accepting God's message:

And say the truth is from your Lord: let him who will, believe; and let him who will, disbelieve . . . Verily, those who have believed and done the things that are right, verily we will not waste the reward of him, whose works were good.⁴²

To those who respond to their Lord shall be an excellent reward, but to those who respond not, had they all what the earth containeth twice over, and they surely would give it for ransom, their account will be evil and hell will be their home! An evil bed will it be!⁴³

Passages like these in the Qur'an clearly stress the element of free choice of man in accepting or rejecting the

⁴¹ Abdalati, 14.

⁴² Sura 18:28, 29.

⁴³ Sura 13:18.

messages sent by Allah. Muslim theologians are painfully aware of these contradictions in the Qur'an and different schools of thought dispute these and similar subjects.⁴⁴

A modern Muslim scholar, Mahmud Staltout, of Cairo, explains the situation thus:

In the eyes of Islam a man chooses either good or evil by his own free will and is rewarded or punished according to his deeds. He is only guided and advised by the messages of Allah and by the apostles but is still completely free to choose as he wishes What is called fate, or testing, is nothing but the operation of natural laws, such as the principles of cause and effect and of the freedom of man.⁴⁵

The Pillars of Islam

In the last section we discussed the fundamental articles of faith that must be held by every Muslim. However, in Islam, faith alone is not sufficient to obtain salvation; faith must be supplemented with works to be accepted by Allah. Abdalati states that :

The true Muslim believes that men must work out his salvation through the guidance of God. This means that in order to attain salvation a person must combine Faith and action, belief and practice. Faith without action is as insufficient as action without Faith. In other words, no one can attain salvation until his Faith in God becomes dynamic in his life and his beliefs are translated into reality.⁴⁶

This section discusses the moral and ritual obligations

⁴⁴ Bethmann, 76.

⁴⁵ Morgan, 111.

⁴⁶ Abdalati, 17.

of Muslims which are summed up in five pillars of faith which provide the moral and ethical counterpoise for the theological tenets which comprise the doctrinal part of Islam.⁴⁷ These Pillars of Religion are: (1) the Confession of the Word of Witness (shahada), (2) the ritual prayer (salat), (3) the giving of legal alms (zakat), (4) observing the month of fasting, Ramadan (saum), and (5) the pilgrimage to the House of Allah at Mecca (Hajj).

The Confession of the Word of Witness (shahada) is the fundamental formula of the Muslim faith; it is the closest thing to a creed in Islam. It is sufficient simply to utter it once in one's life, freely and as a believer, to become a Muslim.⁴⁸ It is phrased in a liturgical form, one of the most famous liturgical expressions in all world religions: la ilaha ill' Allah, (wa) Muhammad rasul Allah, "There is no god but God, [and] Muhammad is the prophet of God."⁴⁹ It could readily be seen that the first part is the basis of Muslims strong monotheistic theology; and the second part is the basis for all Muslim doctrine of revelation, as well as laws of life.

To clarify the misconception that a person becomes a Muslim simply by announcing his acceptance of the beliefs of

 . 47Fry and King, 72.

48Denny, 92.

49Fry and King, 72.

Islam by repeating the shahada, Abdalati wrote,

Some people may think that man becomes a Muslim when he confesses belief in the Oneness of the True God and in Muhammad as His Last Messenger. But this is far from the full meaning of Faith. The full meaning of Faith in Islam is not, by any means, something nominal or mere formality. Faith in Islam is a state of happiness acquired by virtue of positive action and constructive conceptions as well as dynamic and effective measures.⁵⁰

There are rigid guidelines as to the manner of recitation of this confession. Fry and King gives some idea of what they involve:

. . . the Shahada must be repeated aloud, with total comprehension (i.e., it must be understood intellectually, emotionally, and volitionally); it must be recited with sincerity, genuine love in the heart, and no reservations or hesitations in the mind; it must be assumed that the faith will be maintained until death; it must be recited correctly, in the orthodox form, without heterodox changes. If one can confess this creed in sincerity of heart and with integrity of mind, one is a Muslim.⁵¹

Living in a Muslim country like Indonesia one can hear the Shahada being repeated over and over again through the microphones with the five calls to prayer from before dawn to after sunset. It is used in various kinds of occasions.

The confession of faith is mad on all kinds of occasions--at birth it is whispered into the ear of the baby; at death it is spoken over the body of the deceased; in time of battle it is a call to courage; in times of peace it is heard from the minarets of the city both early in the morning and late at night. There is no time in a Muslim's life when the creed is far from his lips or his heart.⁵²

⁵⁰Abdalati, 23.

⁵¹Fry and King, 72, 73.

⁵²Fry and King, 73, 74.

The Ritual Prayer (salat) is the second pillar of Islam which is required of every Muslim. It should be performed five times a day: at dawn, at noon, about three o'clock in the afternoon, at sunset, and about one hour after sunset.⁵³ They are actually times of worship, rather than a prayer as the Christian understands it. The word itself is better translated "worship," since it means to supplicate with adoration. It should be distinguished from spontaneous intercessory prayer, known as du'a, where the individual may use ejaculatory phrases of his or her own choice. The form must be followed if the prayer is to be valid.⁵⁴

Salat is preceded by ceremonial ablutions--the washing of face, hands, and feet with water or sand where water is not available. Prayer without these ablutions is void, even sinful. Physical uncleanness pollutes the spirit; conversely the spirit can be purified by physical cleanliness.⁵⁵ The Muslim finds it most difficult to understand how a Christian can ever worship without bodily purifications. Such a prayer is no prayer at all to him.⁵⁶

⁵³Abdalati, 58.

⁵⁴Kenneth Cragg, The Call of the Minaret (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1964), 106.

⁵⁵Abdalati, 60, 61.

⁵⁶Bethmann, 56.

After the ablution the worshipper has to face Mecca and then begins a prayer, standing, kneeling, prostrating. Every movement is exactly regulated, and if not observed, the prayer is void.⁵⁷

The giving of legal alms (zakat). No definite amount or percentage which should be given is stated in the Qur'an. It is not simply a voluntary contribution to someone or some cause, but it is a duty enjoined by God and undertaken by Muslims in the interest of society as a whole.⁵⁸ The Islamic code prescribes a certain portion of income, which is determined by a rather complicated system. For instance,

It is customary to give one-tenth of the product of the land if it is watered by rain and one-twentieth if it is irrigated by human effort; two and one-half percent of savings is suggested, with equal proportions of the increase in cattle or in trade in goods.⁵⁹

Many Muslims complain that it is not usually well directed and often tends more to create than to alleviate conditions of poverty and need. On the other hand, many consider it to be the best means of promoting the welfare of society. Staltout of Cairo states:

Worship through the giving of the religious tax is the best means of promoting the welfare of society, linking the classes of the community with reciprocal sympathy and compassion, and spreading throughout the people a sentiment of love and cooperation.⁶⁰

⁵⁷Bethmann, 56.

⁵⁸Abdalati, 95.

⁵⁹Morgan, 117.

⁶⁰Morgan, 117.

The motive for giving legal alms is internal, with no external pressure. The Muslim who fails to pay alms is failing in his religious duty, and undermining one of the main pillars of Islam.

Observing the month of fasting, Ramadan (saum). Fasting is considered to be a most suitable means of gaining favor with God, despite the fact that modern writers always emphasize some higher moral values. Note how a modern Muslim scholar puts it,

Fasting is the means by which the Muslim voluntarily abandons certain legitimate frivolous enjoyments as a means of putting his soul to a test and promoting its capacity for perseverance, thus strengthening his will to keep away from sins, both obvious and obscure. The Muslim thereby samples enough of starvation to make him a warm-hearted, hospitable person, sympathetic with the poor who are in constant want.⁶¹

Modern conceptions like this, of course, are not at all the motivating power in instituting Ramadan, nor were they prevalent in early Islam. Fasting is considered a fitting atonement for transgressions committed.⁶² Note what the Qur'an says:

The scent of the breadth of a fasting man is pleasanter than the scent of musk. The one who forsakes his eating and drinking and his lust for My sake I shall recompense tenfold.⁶³

⁶¹Morgan, 116.

⁶²Bethman, 59.

⁶³Sura 43:59-61.

In heaven a special gate called Bab-al Rayyan is the path through which the faster will enter Paradise.⁶⁴ And, Muhammad said, "Who fasts in Ramadan with faith and hope of recompence will receive forgiveness of his previous sins."⁶⁵

The pilgrimage to the House of Allah at Mecca (hajj) is the fifth and last pillar of Islam. This is required of every Muslim, male or female, who is mentally, financially, and physically fit.⁶⁶ The destination is the city of Mecca, the birthplace of Muhammad, the scene of his early life, and the place where he received his first revelations of the Qur'an. The point of interest is the "Holy Black Stone" and shrine, the Ka'aba. According to Islamic tradition, this shrine was constructed originally by Adam, perhaps damaged or destroyed by the great flood with which Noah is linked, and repaired by Abraham and Ishmael.⁶⁷

The numerous ceremonies of the pilgrimage, Muslims believe, are enjoined by God to serve many purposes: to promote a regular conference of peace for all mankind; to demonstrate the universality of Islam and the brotherhood

⁶⁴Sura 43:61.

⁶⁵Sura 16:104.

⁶⁶Abdalati, 99.

⁶⁷Fry and King, 82.

and equality of the Muslims; to confirm the commitment of the Muslims to God; to acquaint the pilgrims with the spiritual and historical environment of Muhammad; to commemorate the rituals observed by Abraham and Ishmael; to remind the Grand Assembly of the Day of Judgment when people will stand equal before God; and to remember the fact that Mecca alone, in the whole existing world, was honored by God in being the center of monotheism since the time of Abraham to the end of time.⁶⁸

The Qur'an

The Qur'an is the authentic Holy Scripture to the Muslims, as the Bible is to the Christian. It is the basis of Islamic doctrine and the main guide for all matters of faith and practice. Unlike the Bible, the Qur'an is the product of one man, Muhammad. The Muslims believe that Muhammad did not compose the Qur'an, but it was revealed to him through the Holy Spirit Gabriel, as it is written, on a tablet in heaven.⁶⁹ In the Qur'an it is stated, "Yet it is a glorious Qur'an written on the preserved tablet."⁷⁰ It has, therefore, become very rigid and untranslatable. Bethman explained that

The Qur'an, therefore, becomes an absolutely rigid unit. There is no possibility of the slightest change, nor is there possibility of an authorized

⁶⁸ Abdalati, 99, 100.

⁶⁹ Abdalati, 193.

⁷⁰ Sura 85:21, 22.

translation. It is more rigid than the Bible in the hands of even the strictest defenders of verbal inspiration. The latter, at least, although perhaps inconsistently, admit the possibility of a mistake in translation.⁷¹

Some shadow is cast upon the conservative view by the manner in which the Qur'an was compiled. The Qur'an was not compiled during Muhammad's lifetime, but verbally to his followers who memorized it and later transcribed it. According to the historian Noldeke, discrepancies were noticed in the first compilation of the Qur'an, so the third Caliph, Uthman, ordered Zayd ibn Thabit to make a recension. When it was completed, all the former copies were destroyed. Noldeke then affirmed that "This second version, which was published under the caliphate Uthman, is the standard version of the Qur'an in the Muslim world to the present day."⁷² Most Muslims are not aware that there were other versions of the Qur'an in existence in the beginning.⁷³ But for scholars there are seven different renditions to be studied, each of which has two variant readings, making a total of fourteen dissimilar accounts of the Qur'an.⁷⁴

⁷¹ Bethmann, 51.

⁷² Bethmann, 52.

⁷³ Ray G. Register, Jr. Dialogue and Interfaith Witness with Muslims (Kingsport, TN: Watson Lithographing, 1979), 31.

⁷⁴ James S. D. Langford, Some Principles of Christian Mission to Muslims (Loma Linda, CA: Loma Linda University, 1983), 60.

Ralph Watts confirmed that

Muslim commentators agree that at least seven different versions have some validity. Therefore it is extremely difficult to discover what "pristin" Islam actually stood for, hidden as it is today under a mass of traditional, philosophical, and mystical interpretations. Yet it is conceivable that in its original setting some elements of the teaching of Islam were not so far divergent from the truth of genuine Christianity.⁷⁵

Even after the standard version of Uthman was circulated, there is evidence that the Qur'an was not perfect. Josh McDowell, a notable writer and lecturer, points out that

There is concrete evidence in the best works of Islamic tradition . . . that from the start the Qur'an had numerous variant and conflicting readings. . . . There is incontrovertible evidence that even this one "Revised Standard Version" of the Qur'an was not perfect. In the most accredited works of Islamic tradition we read that even after these copies were sent out the same Zaid recalled a verse which was missing . . . There is similar evidence that, to this day, verses and, indeed, whole passages are still missing from the Qur'an.⁷⁶

The Qur'an was written in literary Arab, and translations of the Qur'an do not have the perfection and power of the original book.⁷⁷

Points of Conflict Between Muslim and Christian Beliefs

This section gives a summary of some major points of conflict between Muslim and Christian theology. It mainly

⁷⁵ Ralph S. Watts, "The Attitude of Seventh-day Adventists Toward Islam," Ministry 37 (June 1964): 13.

⁷⁶ Josh McDowell, The Islam Debate (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Pub., 1983), 50-51.

⁷⁷ Abdalati, 3.

summarizes the Muslim point of view, taking for granted that the members of this Azusa church are familiar with the Biblical point of view. It helps the lay evangelist understand the basic issues so that he may "be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear."⁷⁸

The Authenticity of the Bible

One of the centuries old points of conflict between Muslim and Christian theology is the authenticity of the Bible. The Muslim impression of the Bible, as will be seen later in this chapter, is that it has been changed, corrupted or falsified. They charge that it has been so changed or corrupted that it is no longer reliable, and bears very little resemblance to the original Pentateuch, Psalms or Gospels supported in the Qur'an, as will be documented later in this chapter. This point of conflict is the principle cause of the misunderstanding which hinders the Muslim from understanding and accepting Biblical truths.

Qur'anic Support of the Bible

First, is an interesting reference where the prophet Muhammed was directed by God to consult with Christians and Jews who possessed the Bible when he was doubtful about revelations in the Qur'an, "And if thou [Muhammad] art in doubt concerning that which we reveal unto thee, then ques-

⁷⁸ 1 Peter 3:15.

tion those who read the Scripture that was before thee."⁷⁹
 If God so directed Muhammad, the prophet of Islam, how could Muslims afford to neglect the Bible as a source of enlightenment? Muslims have not only failed to obey the definite command of God to seek enlightenment from the Bible, but they have also tried to explain away the verse which embodies divine guidance.⁸⁰ Notice how W. Muir describes such Muslim attempts:

The learned doctors of Islam are sadly embarrassed by this verse, referring the prophet, as it does, to the people of the Book who would solve his doubts. They have striven to explain it in such a way as might maintain his dignity, and are thus driven to interpretations, the strangest one has ever heard. . . .⁸¹

The Scriptures are frequently mentioned in the Qur'an, and they are considered revelations from God just like the Qur'an. The following are a few of them:

Verily we have revealed our will unto thee, as we have revealed it unto Noah and the prophets who succeeded him; and as we revealed it unto Abraham, and Ishmael, and Isaac, and Jacob, and the tribes, and unto Jesus, and Job, and Jonas and Aaron, and Solomon; and we have given thee the Qur'an as we gave the Psalms unto David: some apostles have we sent whom we have formerly mentioned unto thee; and other apostles have we sent whom we have not mentioned unto thee; and God spoke unto Moses discursing with him.⁸²

 79 Sura 10:95.

80 Abdiyah Akbar Abdul-Haqq, Sharing Your Faith with a Muslim (Minneapolis: Bethany, 1980), 22-23.

81 W. Muir, The Beacon of Truth (London: Religious Tract Society, 1894), 100.

82 Sura 4:163-4.

Say (O Muslims): We believe in Allah and that which is revealed unto us and that which was revealed unto Abraham and Ishmael, and Isaac and Jacob, and the tribes, and that which Moses and Jesus received, and that which the Prophets received from their Lord.⁸³

Lo! We did reveal the Torah, wherein is guidance and a light . . . And We caused Jesus, son of Mary, to follow in their footsteps, confirming that which was (revealed) before him, and We bestowed on him the Gospel wherein is guidance and light, confirming that which was revealed before in the Torah.⁸⁴

Lo! We inspire thee as we inspired Noah and the prophets after him, as we inspired Abraham and Ishmael and Isaac and Jacob and the tribes, and Jesus and Job and Jonah and Aaron and Solomon, and as we imparted unto David the Psalms.⁸⁵

Numerous other references could be cited which show that the Qur'an always speaks of the earlier books with respect, and that Muhammad believed in their divine origin and genuineness. Bevan Jones has very carefully categorized more than fifty such references scattered throughout the Qur'an (by no means attempting to exhaust them), and then observed that

The general tenor of these passages, scattered throughout the Qur'an, establishes beyond question the fact that the earlier Books were held by Muhammad to be genuine and authoritative, because of their origin. Indeed, his main argument with "the people of the Book" is just this--accept the Qur'an also, because it confirms what was sent down before it, e.g. "O ye, to whom the Scriptures have been given! believe in what we have send

83 Sura 2:156.

84 Sura 5:44-6.

85 Sura 4:163.

down (i.e. the Qur'an), confirmatory of the Scripture which is in your hands,"4:50.⁸⁶

Have the Scriptures been Changed or Annulled?

With such clear Qur'an references to the authority of the Scriptures, what could be the reason for the Muslim charge that the Bible has been changed, corrupted and no longer reliable? Christian polemicists explain that the Biblical corruption theory was merely a means to solve Islam's problem in instances when the Qur'an differed from Biblical Scripture.⁸⁷ Abdul Haqq observed that "It is significant that the Muslim theory of the corruption of the Biblical revelation goes contrary to the Koran as well as the early years of the Islamic movement."⁸⁸ Moslems cite passages in the Qur'an to support their contention that the Bible has been willfully tampered with. However, after carefully considering each of these passages, Bevan Jones observed the following:

Two facts emerge from a consideration of these (1) the people against whom Muhammad brings these charges are Jews, not Christians. . . . (2) even so, in no case are the Jews charged with having tampered with the text of Scriptures. Indeed, after the evidence we have had of the high regard in which he held the earlier books it is unthinkable that by these expressions Muhammad intended actual corruption of the text.⁸⁹

⁸⁶Bevan L. Jones, Christianity Explained to Muslims (Calcutta: YMCA Pub. House, 1938), 7.

⁸⁷Langford, 51.

⁸⁸Haqq, 37.

⁸⁹Jones, 9.

Jones then cited two authorities, Sir William Muir and Sir Sayyid Ahmad Khan, to confirm his conclusion:

Such was the conclusion at which that careful scholar, Sir William Muir, arrived as long ago as 1855, after a most thorough investigation of the meaning of each and every reference in the Qur'an to the earlier Scriptures. His view was confirmed later by the eminent Indian Muslim, Sir Sayyad Ahmad Khan, founder of Aligarh College, who in 1862 wrote a treatise on the subject of tahrif to demonstrate to the Muslims that in no place does the Qur'an charge the Jews and Christians with actual alteration of the text of their Scriptures.⁹⁰

Abdul Haqq states that not only the earliest doctors of Islam, but also many other Muslim scholars refuse to believe that the Bible has been corrupted because of the clear teaching of the Qur'an about its authenticity. He states:

In view of clear teaching of the Koran about the authenticity of the Bible and its freedom from corruption, it is no wonder that not only the earliest doctors of Islam but also many other Muslim scholars after them have refused to entertain a belief contrary to that.⁹¹

Evidence of Ancient Manuscripts

If Muhammad acknowledged the authority of the Bible and its freedom from corruption, it certainly remains the same today. Because today we actually possess ancient manuscripts of both the New Testament and the Old Testament which are known to have been in existence in his day and

⁹⁰Jones, 10.

⁹¹Haqq, 39.

even before his birth. Bevan Jones shows the fallacy of the Biblical corruption theory by clear evidence of ancient manuscripts now in our possession and known to belong to a period prior to the rise of Islam.

We actually possess today ancient Greek manuscripts of the whole Bible, which were copied long before the time of Muhammad by scribes, from still older MSS. It is from these that our modern scholars supply the world with the printed Greek text of the Old and New Testaments. These pre-Islamic MSS. give us the most reliable information as to the contents of the Bible at the time of Muhammad, because, as we shall indicate, they are known to have been in existence in his day, and, indeed, long before his birth.⁹²

The three most notable manuscripts mentioned are: (1) the Codex Alexandrinus, written about 170 years before the Hijra, (2) the Codex Sinaiticus, written about 270 years before the Hijra, and (3) the Codex Vaticanus, written about 300 years before the Hijra.⁹³ The Bible, as we have it today, is, therefore, virtually identical with the one in existence in Muhammad's day, unchanged and uncorrupted.

Expert scrutiny of this mass of material--and it has been made--reveals beyond any manner of doubt that, in all essential particulars, the Bible then was what it is now. In other words, these documents are silent but incontrovertible witnesses to the fact that there has been no such wilful tempering with the text of the Scriptures, as alleged, since the days when they were written, hundreds of years before the Hijra.⁹⁴

Furthermore, the modern discovery of the Dead Sea

⁹²Jones, 25.

⁹³Jones, 25-6.

⁹⁴Jones, 27

Scrolls in 1947 is an irrefutable Christian argument against the Muslim Biblical corruption theory. A complete book of Isaiah included in the Dead Sea Scrolls discovery, for example, is ninety-five percent identical to the book of Isaiah in our Bible today. One Bible scholar states that the Isaiah scrolls "proved to be word for word identical with our standard Hebrew Bible in more than 95% of the text. The 5% variation consisted chiefly of obvious slips of the pen and variations in spelling."⁹⁵

The Old Testament we have today is the same as used by Jesus himself six centuries before the birth of Muhammad. Thus, the Muslim belief that the Bible has been changed is utterly incorrect and without foundation.

The Theory of Abrogation

This Muslim theory says that a later revelation abrogated an earlier revelation. Thus, the Qur'an abrogated the previous revelations and religions. We have already noted that the testimony of the Qur'an itself has been entirely the reverse of this. For Muslims, abrogation is considered to be God's prerogative. Langford explains:

In addition to the Islamic theory of the distortion of the Bible to undermine its value, Islam relies on its doctrine of abrogation "which was used by Muhammad to substitute a passage in the Qur'an with a later revelation." Also observed is the fact that for Muslims abrogation is considered to be God's prerogative. Thus the Islamic doctrine of abrogation, applying even to the

⁹⁵Register, 31.

Qur'an itself, is that later revelation supersedes earlier revelation.⁹⁶

There are two verses in the Qur'an used to support this abrogation theory. These verses actually refer not to the Bible, but to certain verses in the Qur'an itself which are declared to be annulled. The following are the passages in questions: "And for whatever verse We abrogate or cast into oblivion, We bring a better or the like of it; knowest thou not that God is powerful over everything."⁹⁷ The other passage says:

And when We exchange a verse in the place of another verse--and God knows very well what he is sending down--they say, "Thou art a mere forger!" Nay, but the most of them have no knowledge.⁹⁸

Muslim scholars disagree as to the number of verses so abrogated--it has ranged from five to five hundred. A common figure is 225.⁹⁹ The following are two samples of verses in the Qur'an said to have been abrogated:

Verily, they who believe [Muslims], and they who follow the Jewish religion, and the Christians, and the Sabeites--whoever of these believeth in God and the last day, and doeth that which is right, shall have their reward with their Lord; fear shall not come upon them, neither shall be grieved.¹⁰⁰

This verse is said to be abrogated by the following:

⁹⁶ Langford, 61.

⁹⁷ Sura 2:100.

⁹⁸ Sura 16:102.

⁹⁹ Jones, 29.

¹⁰⁰ Sura 2:59.

"Whoso desireth any other religion than Islam, that religion shall surely not be accepted from him, and in the next world he shall be among the lost."¹⁰¹

"Let there be no compulsion in religion."¹⁰² This verse is said to be abrogated by the following:

When the sacred months are passed, kill those who join other gods with God wherever ye shall find them; and seize them, besiege them, and lay wait for them with every kind of ambush.¹⁰³

And also by the following:

Make war upon such of those to whom the Scriptures have been given as believe not in God, or in the last day, and who forbid not that which God and his Apostle have forbidden. . . ."¹⁰⁴

We have already noted that one of the articles of faith (iman) in Islam is to believe in the books that Allah has sent before the Qur'an. We have also noted that there are numerous references in the Qur'an which speak of the earlier books with respect and that Muhammad believed in their divine origin and genuineness. Therefore, the testimony of the Qur'an itself is entirely the reverse of this abrogation theory. This doctrine is "extremely distasteful to the modern educated Muslim."¹⁰⁵ If the Qur'an is mutually con-

101 Sura 3:79.

102 Sura 2:257.

103 Sura 9:5.

104 Sura 9:25.

105 Jones, 30.

tradictory, it could not be the infallible revelation of God that the Muslims believe. A Muslim writer comments, as quoted by Bevan Jones:

To say that there are mutually contradictory verses in the Qur'an is to confess that it is not the word of God; for the Qur'an itself says that if this book were from any other besides God it would be found to contain many contradictions.¹⁰⁶

Furthermore, if Muslim scholars cannot agree as to which verses in the Qur'an have been declared annulled, then this abrogation theory is based on mere human conjecture. Another Muslim writer comments:

Since there is no agreement among Muslim writers as to the number of verses so abrogated, the doctrine itself is based on mere conjecture. . . there is no tradition which traces abrogation back to the authority of Muhammad.¹⁰⁷

If Muslims continue to read the 225 verses in the Qur'an declared to be annulled, why don't they read the Bible, which the Qur'an does not declare to be annulled, but commands to believe in?

The Doctrine of the Trinity

The Christian trinitarian concept of God is an area that has drawn the most attack and scoffing from Muslims, for it is judged to be unnecessary, irrational and shirk, the sin that God cannot forgive. The Muslim doctrine of the unity of God is so fundamental that any statement not in

¹⁰⁶Jones, 31.

¹⁰⁷Jones, 31.

conformity with this belief is rejected. Furthermore, Muslims make no serious attempt to weigh the reasons put forward by Christian theologians for the origin of this doctrine, or to consider its real implications.¹⁰⁸

Living in a Muslim country one becomes familiar with the day-by-day monotonous repetitions of the muezzin la-illaha-illa-Allah (there is no God except Allah), the first of the two clauses of the Islamic creed. This Arabic phrase has become a household word and an exclamatory phrase in both Muslim and Christian homes. It also impresses the doctrine of the unity of God into the hearts of every Muslim. Islam came into being in the seventh century A.D. as a reaction against polytheism. Muhammad fought this pagan worship of many gods and emphasized that there is only one true God. Consequently, the Christian concept of the trinity of God reminds the Muslim of that pagan worship of many gods. Muslims consider it blasphemy and unpardonable to place another god equal with Allah. Christians are considered to be worshipping three gods when they worship God the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit.

The following are three references in the Qur'an Muslims frequently use to warn against the supposedly three gods in Christianity:

They surely blaspheme who say, "God is the third of three;" for there is no god but the one God, and if they refrain not from what they say, a

¹⁰⁸ Jones, 85.

grievous chastisement shall befall such of them as do blaspheme.¹⁰⁹

And when God shall say, "O Jesus, Son of Mary, hast thou said unto mankind--take me and my mother as two gods, besides God?" he shall say, "Glory be unto Thee! it is not for me to say that which I know to be not the truth; had I said that, verily Thou wouldest have known it: Thou knowest what is in me, but I know what is in Thee."¹¹⁰

Note carefully the words "word" and "spirit" in the following verse:

O people of the Scripture! Do not exaggerate in your religion nor utter ought concerning Allah save the truth. The Messiah, Jesus son of Mary, was only a messenger of Allah, and His word which He conveyed unto Mary, and a spirit from Him. So believe in Allah and His messengers, and say not "Three"--Cease! (it is) better for you!--Allah is only One God. Far is it removed from His transcendent majesty that He should have a son.¹¹¹

Many Muslims do not know that Christians are strong believers in the unity of God, no less than the Muslims. Islam and Christianity are together in believing that God is One. They only differ as to how they define this unity.

The unity of God and/or monotheism are at the heart of Christianity. . . . Islam and Christianity are together in both believing that God is One but only differ as to how to define and understand the Divine Unity. In Christian theology God's unity is encompassed in the Trinity of God the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost referred to as three persons in the substance.¹¹²

Kenneth Cragg states that the Christian faith in the

¹⁰⁹ Sura 5:77.

¹¹⁰ Sura 5:116.

¹¹¹ Sura 4:171.

¹¹² Langford, 28.

Trinity is not a violation of faith in God's unity.

The Christian faith in God as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit is not a violation of faith in God's Unity. It is a way of understanding that Unity--a way, the Christian would go on to say, of safeguarding that unity. Perhaps our largest duty with the Muslim mind lies just here. For the Muslim, faith in God as father, Son, and Holy Spirit does violence to the Divine Unity. For the Christian, it expresses and illuminates the unity.¹¹³

Muhammad apparently had a poor understanding of the true meaning of the Christian doctrine of Trinity. He obviously had access to distorted information about the Christian doctrine. In the Qur'anic passages quoted above it appeared to him that the Christian Trinity consists of God the Father, Mary the Mother, and Jesus the Son, instead of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Muhammad is not altogether to be blamed for this misunderstanding, considering the degenerated spiritual condition of the Christians surrounding him--including the worship of the Virgin Mary.

Langford explains:

Almost from the beginning of Christianity there have been those involved in Mariolatry, the belief in the divinity of Mary. There were some Church fathers at the Nicean Council who held the notion of the divinity of Mary.¹¹⁴

Christian heretical doctrines like these, prevalent in his time, misled Muhammad to the conclusion that Christians believed in three gods. When Muslims today see facts like

¹¹³ Cragg, 307.

¹¹⁴ Langford, 34.

these their minds will begin to open and may ask the question, "What then, is the real Christian doctrine of Allah?" The lay evangelist can positively declare that Islam and Christianity are together in believing that God is One. He or she may further point out that the three "persons" or "personalities" of God are also found in the Qur'an, as we have noted in Sura 4:171. We have also noted above in Sura 4:171 that the word "word" is reserved for Jesus alone, and "spirit" is mentioned.

It is interesting to note that this same Qur'anic text used to attack the Christian doctrine of the Trinity contains the Qur'anic teaching to believe in Allah Almighty and also His other two aspects, the Word and the Spirit of Allah. This is how Muhammad understood the complexity of Allah and His dealings with man. This is also exactly the essence of the Christian understanding of the Trinity. For the lack of a better word, Christianity has called these aspects of Allah "persons," hence, the three persons of God or the Trinity. The word "persons" could well be substituted with "aspects," "attributes," or "personalities" of God without violating the Christian understanding of the Godhead. These are merely human attempts to understand the fullness of God. Muhammad could not have described these attributes of God, the Word and the Spirit, as "persons" because in the Muslim mind it conveys the idea of the "corporeal, physical, concrete human connotation."¹¹⁵

Sura 4:141 is not a solitary verse on the subject. The following are two more references from the Qur'an. In the first one we find another mention of the Holy Spirit and in the second, the Word.

We gave unto Jesus, son of Mary, clear proofs [of Allah's sovereignty], and We supported him with the holy Spirit.¹¹⁶

[And remember] when the angels said: O Mary! Lo! Allah giveth thee glad tidings of a word from Him, whose name is the Messiah, Jesus, son of Mary, illustrious in the world and the Hereafter, and one of those brought near [unto Allah].¹¹⁷

The Muslim who carefully examines Qur'anic references like these can see that the Qur'an does teach him to believe in the Word of Allah and the Spirit of Allah, as well as Allah the Almighty. This makes it easier for him to accept the Christian doctrine of the Trinity.

We agree with Langford who concludes:

Finally, it should be stated that Christians agree with Muhammad and the words of Jesus in the Table (5): 117 that there is not trinity of God, Mary, and Jesus. Christians believe in One God who reveals Himself in three different ways. If the three persons of the Trinity were described to Muslims as personalities, natures, attributes, or aspects in God, in all likelihood Muslims would have no disagreement with the Christian Trinity.¹¹⁸

¹¹⁵Phil Parshall, New Paths in Muslim Evangelism: Evangelical Approaches to Contextualization (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1980), 144.

¹¹⁶Sura 2:87.

¹¹⁷Sura 3:45.

¹¹⁸Langford, 37.

One of the illustrations that have helped Muslims understand the Christian concept of the Trinity is the idea of the sun existing as light, heat, and energy. Illustrations like this may be helpful; however, the best way to convey the Christian concept of the Trinity to a Muslim is to explain in a simple manner what the Bible teaches about it.

The Divine Sonship of Jesus

Understanding the Christian position on the doctrine of the Trinity makes it easier for the Muslim to understand the Christian phrase "Son of God" as applied to Jesus Christ. Just as the word "persons" in the Godhead has no corporeal, physical or concrete human connotation, so in the Christian mind the word "Son" and "Father" in the Trinity carries no understanding of the corporeal or of physical relationship. Since the time of Muhammad, Muslims have misunderstood "Son of God" to mean that Jesus was God's son as a result of a physical relationship with Mary.

The Qur'an not only emphasizes the Unity of Allah, as we have noticed, it also repeatedly repudiates the idea that God has offspring. Let us notice some of these passages, beginning with the most frequently quoted Sura, "Say, He is God alone. God, the Eternal! He doth not beget, and He is not begotten; and there is no one in His likeness at all."¹¹⁹

¹¹⁹ Sura, 112:1-4.

Muhammad himself is credited with having declared that the Sura just quoted above is "equal to a third of the Qur'an."¹²⁰ It is recited every day by most Muslims, and, since it is one of the earliest Meccan Suras, this would mean that it was directed against the pagan worship of many gods, though later writers turned it against Christian doctrine.¹²¹

Note another verse directed to the polytheism of pagan Arabia:

Say: "If the God of Mercy had a son, the first would be I to worship him: but far be the Lord of the Heavens and of the Earth, the Lord of the Throne from that which they impute to Him."¹²²

The following are only three of the references directed to Christians:

This is Jesus, son of Mary; this is a statement of the truth concerning which they doubt. It be-
seemeth not God to beget a son. Glory be to
Him!¹²³

The Christians say, "The Messiah is the son of God." Such are the sayings in their mouths. They resemble the sayings of infidels of old! God fight them! How misguided they are! . . . Far from His glory be what they associate with Him!¹²⁴

They say, "God of mercy hath taken to Himself a son." Now have ye done a monstrous thing! Almost

¹²⁰ Jones, 67.

¹²¹ Geoffrey Parrinder, Jesus in the Qur'an (New York: Barnes & Noble, 1965), 126.

¹²² Sura 43:81, 82.

¹²³ Sura 19:35, 36.

¹²⁴ Sura 9:31, 32.

might the very Heavens be rent there at, and the Earth cleave asunder, and the mountains fall down in fragments, that they ascribe a son to the God of Mercy, when it beseemeth not the God of Mercy to beget a son.¹²⁵

A study of references like these in the Qur'an shows that Muhammad misunderstood the phrase "Son of God" as a grossly carnal one. His conclusion was influenced by two things: the blasphemous expressions of the idolatrous Arabs, and the Jews who cast a slur on the names of Jesus and Mary.¹²⁶ Such an idea of the "sonship" is equally repugnant and blasphemous to Christians who understood it metaphorically. For Muhammad, there would have been no objection to the use of the phrase "Son of God": had it been employed metaphorically, since both Jews and Christians were known to call themselves "sons of God," in the sense that they believe themselves especially beloved or favored by God.¹²⁷ The gross understanding of God physically begetting a son when seen in the light of the strong Muslim doctrine of the Unity of God and the dreaded unpardonable sin (shirk) makes the phrase "Son of God" strongly resented by Muslims. Christians can fully agree with this Muslim sentiment, because they have never held any doctrine similar to the polytheistic beliefs of pagan Arabia denounced in the

¹²⁵ Sura 19:91-93.

¹²⁶ Jones, 63.

¹²⁷ Jones, 64.

Qur'an. That is why Christians do not use the Arabic term waladu'llah, son of Allah, in the physical sense, but call Christ ibnu'llah, son of Allah, in the metaphorical sense. Pfander says that the difference between the two expressions is very great, for the word ibn is suitable particularly for the use in a metaphorical sense, which sense is needed in the title "Son of God."¹²⁸ Pfander further quoted Lactantius who wrote 300 years before the Hijra against the misconceptions of the physical sonship of God. Pfander wrote:

Christian writers who lived hundreds of years before the Hijra repeatedly denounced the carnal ideas of the heathen, and pointed out in what an entirely different sense the title of ibnu'llah is given to Christ. For instance, Lactantius, writing about A.D. 306, more than 300 years before the Hijra, says, "He who hears the words 'Son of God' spoken must not conceive in his mind such great wickedness as to fancy that God procreated through marriage and union with any female."¹²⁹

With the strong influence of the Qur'an it is very difficult for Muslims to accept any Christian explanation about the divine sonship of Christ. Muhammad himself understood the metaphorical use of the phrase by the Jews and Christians, yet he seemed incapable of understanding the Christian concept of the sonship of Christ aside from a physical significance. If the Muslim is still unable to understand, the lay evangelist, then, has to explain to him precisely

¹²⁸ C. G. Pfander, The Mizanu'l Hagg, "Balance of Truth" (London: Religious Tract Society, 1910), 163.

¹²⁹ Pfander, 163.

what Christians do mean by the title "Son of God", as used for Jesus Christ. He has to explain why and what authority Christians have for doing so.

The Death of Christ on the Cross

The issue of Christ's death on the cross has been a controversy in the Muslim world for centuries. To summarize, perhaps oversimplifying the issue: most Muslims hold to the orthodox view that Jesus did not die on the cross: The other view, which Jones calls the "modern rationalist," holds that Jesus did die, not on the cross, but a natural death. Either way the argument goes, it has fostered, in the Muslim mind, a strong denial of the most fundamental Christian faith--the guarantee of forgiveness of sins which God has provided by the death of Christ on the cross. Jones calls it "an amazing feature in Islam," as he describes this controversy:

We have here an amazing feature in Islam: the vast majority of the Muslim people have always held, and do still hold, that God, in the phrase of the Qur'an "took up" Jesus to heaven, so that He escaped death that day at the place called Golgotha. But now, over against this centuries-old traditional belief, the Ahmadis have propounded the view that Jesus after all did die and that a natural death, at some time and place.¹³⁰

The causes of this controversy are the ambiguous and inconsistent statements in the Qur'an on the death of Jesus. The key passage used to support the belief that Christ did

¹³⁰ Jones, 99.

not really die on the cross seems to state that God saved Jesus from death just before the crucifixion. He lifted him up into heaven and allowed someone else who resembled him to be crucified in his place. Notice what the verse says:

And because of their [the Jews'] disbelief and of their speaking against Mary a tremendous calumny; and because of their saying: We slew the Messiah Jesus, son of Mary, Allah's messenger--They slew him not nor crucified, but it appeared so unto them; and lo! those who disagree concerning it are in doubt thereof; they have no knowledge thereof save pursuit of a conjecture; they slew him not for certain. But Allah took him up unto Himself. Allah was ever Mighty and Wise.¹³¹

God saved Jesus from death and took him up to heaven. This is the orthodox Islam view of the Christian belief in the death of Christ on the cross subscribed to by the majority of Muslims even today. It is a denial of the death of Christ on the cross. This view is based on the strong Muslim belief in the sovereignty of God who would never have permitted His prophet to die so shameful a death. It is also a strong refutation of the Christian teaching of Christ's substitutionary death on the cross.

On the other hand, a number of verses in the Qur'an make clear reference to the death and resurrection of Jesus:

And the Jews plotted, and God plotted. But of those who plot God is the best. Remember when God said, "O Jesus, verily I will cause thee to die (mutawaffika), and will take thee up (rafi'uka), to Myself and deliver thee from those who believe not."¹³²

¹³¹Sura 4:156-8.

¹³²Sura 3:47-8.

I [Jesus] spake unto them only that which Thou commandest me [saying]: worship Allah, my Lord and your Lord. I was a witness of them while I dwelt among them, and when Thou put me to death [tawaffaitani] Thou wast the Watcher over them.¹³³

The peace of God was on me the day I was born, and will be the day I shall die [amutu], and the day I shall be raised to life. Such was Jesus, son of Mary, [this is] a statement of the truth concerning which they doubt.¹³⁴

These direct statements on the death and resurrection of Jesus contradict Sura 4:156-8, quoted above, where God saved Jesus from death and took him to heaven. Muslim commentators have given numerous varied and conflicting explanations on these vague and conflicting statements in the Qur'an. Some say that these passages simply state the natural death of Jesus; others say that Jesus died for a few hours and was later resurrected and taken by God to heaven. Some believe that this death of Jesus is his death after his second coming and forty years of reign on earth prior to the Great Judgment Day.

The cross, which for Christians guarantees pardon and forgiveness, is for the Muslims but an object of scorn and blasphemy. Christian evangelists are to help their Muslim friends transform this symbol of defeat into a sign of victory and this object of blasphemy into a subject of praise.

Forgiveness of Sin

¹³³ Sura 5:117.

¹³⁴ Sura 9:33-34.

As is true with all religions of the world, apart from Christianity, Muslims believe that man must somehow make appeasement for his sins through his own efforts or good works. The Qur'an teaches clearly:

Every soul will taste of death. And ye will be paid on the Day of Resurrection only that which ye have fairly earned. Whoso is removed from the Fire and is made to enter Paradise, he indeed is triumphant.¹³⁵

The prophet Muhammad teaches that on Judgment Day each individual will be judged with a set of just balances; his good deeds will be weighted against his bad deeds, thus determining whether he is sent to eternal hell or everlasting Paradise. In the Qur'an Muhammad wrote:

They whose balances shall be heavy, shall be blest. But they whose balances shall be light-- these are they who shall lose their souls, abiding in hell forever.¹³⁶

Salvation by works is basically the teaching of the Qur'an; it always speaks of the necessity of man to do as many good works as possible to counterbalance all his sins.

Whosoever submits himself entirely to Allah and is the doer of good to others, he has his reward with his Lord, and there is no fear for them, nor shall they grieve.¹³⁷

Give ye your alms openly? it is well. Do ye conceal them and give them to the poor? This too will be of advantage to you, and will do away your sins; and God is cognisant of your actions.¹³⁸

135 Sura 3:185.

136 Sura 23:104-5.

137 Sura 2:106.

138 Sura 2:273.

Whoso shall obey God, and His Apostle, and shall dread God and fear Him, these are they that shall be the blissful.¹³⁹

But whoso believe, and do the things that are right, and believe in that which hath been sent down to Muhammad--for it is the truth from the Lord--their sins shall be cancelled and dispose their hearts aright.¹⁴⁰

In passages like these we see that the Qur'an teaches that salvation is not only by works but also by the intercession of the prophet Muhammad. In an exposition of the Islamic theory of intercession, Mirza Ghulam Ahmad of Qadian maintains that sinlessness is essential in the intercessor:

What a person needs to be an intercessor is a two-fold relation, and reason attests to the truth of this fact. An extra-ordinary connection with God and a deep sympathy for human beings, can alone enable a man to intercede for the latter with the former. . . . Our Holy Prophet, . . . had the other side of his nature perfected. . . . He thus acquired the position midway between God and men. . . In his holy person were, therefore, combined the two qualifications of an intercessor.¹⁴¹

To understand the Muslim concept of forgiveness, one has to understand his view of sin. Unlike the Christian view of the original sinfulness of man after the fall, Muslims believe in a sort of original righteousness of man, that man is good by nature. Abdul Haqq wrote:

There are traditions to the effect that a child is born naturally inclined toward the true religion--

¹³⁹ Sura 24:51.

¹⁴⁰ Sura 47:2.

¹⁴¹ Ghulam Ahmad Mirza, Sinlessness of Prophets (Lahore, India: Mohammedan Tract & Book Depot, n.d.), 8, 10.

which is understood to be Islam. . . . In other words, every child is born a Muslim naturally but is perverted, after birth by his environment.¹⁴²

This is the Muslim explanation of the word "fitra" in Sura 3:30:

So set thy purpose for religion as a man by nature upright--the nature (framed) of God, in which he hath created man (fitra). There is no altering (of the laws) of God's creation. That is the right religion and most men know it not.

Sin in Islam is, therefore, not a state or nature into which man is born, but it is an act or a doing of what is forbidden by God (haram) or an act of not doing his duties (wajib).¹⁴³ There are many categories and degrees of sin in Islamic theology--at least fifteen different Arabic words are used. The sin of sins that Allah does not forgive is shirk. Placing another being equal with the Supreme Being, is unbearable in the Muslim mind; it is an abomination. The Qur'an states:

Verily, God will not forgive the union of other gods with Himself! But other than this He will forgive to whom He pleaseth. And he who uniteth gods with God hath deviseth a great wickedness.¹⁴⁴

Because of Muslim misunderstanding of the doctrine of the Trinity, Christians are accused of practicing shirk. Therefore, no matter how good a Christian may be, he is evil, because he is continuously committing the unpardonable

¹⁴² Haqq, 158.

¹⁴³ Jones, 127.

¹⁴⁴ Sura 4:51.

sin.

If sin is an act of evil deed, then an act of good deed will cancel out sin. Therefore, the Qur'an lists various good works which are sufficient to cancel out one's sins and earn forgiveness. Such good works would include: the giving of alms, fasting, ritual prayer, reading and memorizing the Qur'an, the saying of the creeds, and pilgrimage to the House of Allah. Therefore, the problem of sin as Christians see it, does not exist in Islam. There is no deep conviction of sin and, hence, no need of redemption and salvation from sin.

Naturally, as there is no deep conviction of sin in Islam, no feeling of an estrangement between God and man, there is no need for reconciliation, no need for redemption, nor for a Savior from sin, no need for a complete turn in life, nor for being born again in the likeness of the Spirit. And here lies the deepest gulf which separates Christianity from Islam.¹⁴⁵

Another important fact that influences Islamic theology of sin is the strong belief in determinism (qadr). We find numerous passages in the Qur'an which clearly state that man's course of life is mapped out beforehand. The following are some of them:

No man can die except by God's order, according to the book that fixeth the term of life.¹⁴⁶

Every man's fate we have fastened about his neck.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁵ Bethmann, 80.

¹⁴⁶ Sura 3:139.

¹⁴⁷ Sura 17:14.

Allah will mislead who He pleaseth and whom He
pleaseth He will place upon the straight path.¹⁴⁸

To whom belongs what is in the heavens and on
earth. He forgives whom He pleases and punishes
whom He pleases, for God is forgiving and
merciful.¹⁴⁹

Passages like these are diametrically opposed to passages in
the Qur'an, which teach that man is saved by his good works,
which presupposes the element of free choice. Muslim
theologians have long disputed this problem, until
Al-Ash'ari (A.D. 873-935) settled the question. According
to Bethman, this is how Al-Ash'ari solved the problem:

He maintained the absolute, eternal, free will of
God, including His power to will evil and to do
evil. But he allowed man certain powers. . . .
That means, if God wills a thing, He creates in
man the power to acquire it. The acquiring of the
thing willed by God is man's own act, and thereby
his responsibility is established.¹⁵⁰

Bethman does not see any real solution here. He says it is
fatalism somewhat camouflaged.

That this is no real solution is very apparent.
It is just a make believe scheme that man has his
own choice in determining his fate while in
reality he cannot acquire any object, good or
evil, except God creates in him the power to ac-
quire it. It is fatalism somewhat camouflaged.
This view has become the accepted philosophy of
the masses in Islam.¹⁵¹

The Qur'an does teach about the forgiveness of sins.

¹⁴⁸ Sura 6:39.

¹⁴⁹ Sura 3:124.

¹⁵⁰ Bethmann, 76.

¹⁵¹ Bethmann, 77.

It says, "O my servants who have been extravagant against their souls, be not in despair of the mercy of God; verily God forgives sins, all of them, verily He is forgiving and merciful."¹⁵² There are conditions to God's forgiveness.

Abdul Haqq lists them as follows:

1. Following the prophet
(Sura 3:29; 57:28; 46:30)
2. Conversion to Islam
(Sura 9:5; 49:14; 9:12)
3. Forsaking polytheism
(Sura 5:78; 33:73; 4:51)
4. Making an expiation of breaking the ceremonial law (Sura 5:96-98; 58:3)
5. A reward of good actions
(Sura 64:17; 9:100; 30:27)¹⁵³

However, even after fulfilling all these conditions, a Muslim does not have the assurance of forgiveness or salvation, which depends entirely on the arbitrary will of God. Haqq informs us that

When all these conditions are fulfilled, even then forgiveness remains an eschatological hope. All major sins can be forgiven only in the hereafter. Moreover, as mentioned earlier, the forgiveness of God depends entirely on His arbitrary will.¹⁵⁴

This insecurity is mentioned even with regard to the prophet Muhammad. Quoting a tradition from Abu Majah, Al-Ghazzali wrote:

In his prayer the apostle said, "O God, I seek refuge in thee against evil of things I did and things I left undone." He was then told, "Art

¹⁵²Sura 39:54.

¹⁵³Haqq, 161.

¹⁵⁴Haqq, 161-2.

thou afraid O apostle of God?" To which he replied, "What could make me feel secure when the heart lies between two of the fingers of the Merciful (God)." "And there shall appear to them, from God, things they have never reckoned on." (Sura 39:47). This was interpreted in commentaries to mean that men have done things which they thought were good but (on the Day of Judgment) these things appeared in the balance in the scale of evil.¹⁵⁵

Abdul Haqq very accurately pointed to one of the most important causes of this uncertainty about the future state of salvation being the lack of the experience of forgiveness of sins in the present.

A doubt of uncertainty as to the future state of salvation may also be due to a lack of the experience of forgiveness of sins in the present. As the Muslims believe that all major sins will only be forgiven in the hereafter, it is easy to see that they are under a necessity to bear the guilt of sins till the Day of Judgment.¹⁵⁶

It is very important for the lay evangelist to emphasize the rich blessings and joy which come from the assurance of the forgiveness of sins and the certainty of salvation a Christian has through faith in the atoning blood of Christ.

¹⁵⁵ Haqq, 166.

¹⁵⁶ Haqq, 167.

CHAPTER 4

Some Practical Recommendations

Evangelism in a local church should include: (1) the presentation of the Gospel message in such a way that men should be led to accept Christ, (2) the assistance to live the message and be prepared for Christ's soon coming, and (3) the encouragement to turn to win others to Christ.

Step number one is the essence of Christian evangelism. It is the content, the purpose and goal of all evangelism. However, too many evangelistic efforts end with step number one. As soon as a person accepts Jesus Christ he is left on his own to do whatever he wishes.

Seventh-day Adventist evangelism goes on to steps number two and three. They do not baptize and accept into membership just anyone who confesses that he or she accepts Jesus Christ. They want to be sure this person knows what God expects of him and begins to live a life ready to meet Him. When Jesus commanded His disciples to go and to baptize, He also told them to teach people to observe the things that He had commanded them. This is the harder part of evangelism. This is why the number of those joining the Seventh-day Adventist Church is comparatively small. They believe that they are doing more harm spiritually to a per-

son if they accept him into church membership while he continues to live in open violation of the commandments of God. This is why step number two seeks to instruct men, so that they will be prepared to live the message and make personal preparation for Christ's soon coming. Therefore, the fundamental Bible doctrines as accepted by the church should be included in all evangelistic sermons or Bible studies. Then, even before they are accepted into church membership, converts are encouraged and instructed to win others to Christ.

In this chapter a one-year evangelistic program is suggested for the Azusa church along with a list of some evangelistic approaches that can be used. The list is by no means exhaustive, and it is selective as to the ones which could be used by this church in its unique situation. The second part of this chapter makes some specific suggestions for church members who will be working with Muslims.

Evangelism for Non-Muslim Indonesians

The following is a six-month evangelistic countdown program which could be used in this church.

Six-Month Evangelistic Countdown

- | | |
|--------------|--|
| 6 mos. ahead | 1) Plan with Church Board |
| | 2) Evangelistic rally in church |
| | 3) Correspondence Bible school enrollments |
| | 4) Training lay evangelist class |
| 3 mos. ahead | 1) Follow-up on Bible school students |

- 2) Begin making interest list
 - 3) Obtain decisions from other Bible studies or group studies: youth, pastor's class, cottage meetings, branch Sabbath Schools, etc.
 - 4) Visitation class for members
- 2 mos. ahead
- 1) All member commitment rally in church
 - 2) Mailing more literature to all interested parties
 - 3) Organize the campaign; form parties
- 1 mo. ahead
- 1) Write and visit all interested persons
 - 2) Have all posters and handbills ready
- 2 wks. ahead
- 1) Church revival and commitment
 - 2) Brief lay-evangelism class, refresher
 - 3) Specific instructions for campaign
- 1 wk. ahead
- 1) Mail handbills
 - 2) Put up signs
 - 3) Quick call on all interested persons
 - 4) Write all members urging participation
 - 5) Special prayer session
- 2 days ahead--all handbills distributed
- D-day
- 1) Saturday morning special prayer session
 - 2) All committees stand by
 - 3) Begin on time
- The Campaign
- 1) The program - brief and interesting
 - 2) The committees - all functioning well

- 3) The message - Christ-centered
 - 4) Health message - use doctors and nurses
 - 5) Building interest: awards, topic
arrangement, slides, movies, quizzes
 - 6) Making appeals frequently
 - 7) Baptism, plan early
- Follow-up
- 1) Care of new members, spiritual guardian
 - 2) Put new members to work
 - 3) Prospect who is not baptized
 - a. Visitation and further study
 - b. Special class in Sabbath School
 - c. Social activities
 - d. Mailing list, prayer list

Lay Evangelist Training Class

This is a very informal discussion class led by the church pastor or an experienced evangelist. Counsel from retired ministers and evangelists in this church must be solicited. A guest speaker can be of much help. Every adult church member should be encouraged to participate. A training class should be held at least once a year, with a refresher class prior to an evangelistic campaign. The class will boost evangelistic enthusiasm and encourage lay members to win souls. Discussions should include: how to give Bible studies (for advanced members), how to present fundamental beliefs of the church, how to intelligibly answer questions and to discuss them, how to approach Muslim

friends, etc.

Bible Correspondence School

This is one of the most effective means of evangelism in the Azusa Indonesian Church. It is inexpensive, and could easily be operated by lay members. Yet, it is very effective because the full Gospel can be presented in an attractive and forceful manner. It can penetrate into homes, apartments, and offices, where house-to-house visitation cannot reach. It allows the shy person, who otherwise would not discuss any spiritual matters, to learn about the Good News in the privacy of his or her bedroom. It allows the busy businessman or the student to study the Bible at his own convenient time. It allows every participant, both the fast and the slow learner, to study at his or her own pace. The Bible correspondence school can reach many more people with the Gospel message at one time than a public evangelistic campaign. Yet this area has barely been touched, and, at this time, nothing at all is being done in this church. This is particularly true with trying to reach the Muslims.

There are three kinds of Bible correspondence schools this church could use very effectively in an evangelistic program.

1. There are several free English and Spanish Seventh-day Adventist Bible correspondence courses in the area where members can enroll non-Indonesians as well as Indonesians who prefer to use the English language. The newcomers and

students like to use the schools to learn English at their own pace in their homes. In fact, this is a good way to approach newcomers with the Gospel message.

2. The Indonesian Bible Correspondence Course. Needless to say, it is much easier and more meaningful if people study the Bible in their own language. For newcomers it is a welcome sight to see something printed in Indonesian in a mail saturated daily with materials in English. Many Indonesians who have lived longer in the United States like to use this course to keep up with their Indonesian language. The church has to run and operate this school, pay for the stamps, correct answer sheets and mail them back to the students.

3. Bible Correspondence School for the Muslims. This is one of the most effective means of winning Muslims to Christ in Indonesia, and it is the best way this church can use to reach their Muslim friends with the Gospel message. A further discussion on this is made in the next section.

Vacation Bible Schools

It has been wisely said that when you touch the head of a child you touch the heart of the parent. Vacation Bible School is helpful in many ways: (1) it keeps parents from worrying about the whereabouts of their children, (2) it keeps the children from wandering around and getting into mischief during vacation time, (3) it gives the children something positive to do, (4) opens the avenue to reach the

parents with the message, and (5) best of all, it sows the seed of the Gospel in young hearts.

Door-to-Door Literature Distribution

Saturate the community with literature filled with the good news of salvation in Christ. A haphazard way of literature distribution can do more harm than good. An organized way of doing it would include: (1) members or families made responsible for certain areas in the city, (2) distribution of literature should be on a regular basis, (3) a friendly visit can do much good, (4) interest them in Bible studies in their homes, and (5) interest them in enrolling in the Bible Correspondence School.

Around-the-Year Saturday Night Evangelistic Sermons

This is a continuous program which has proved to be very successful in many places around the world. It is an inexpensive way of proclaiming the Gospel. Coming to church from long distances, having not met friends and relatives during the week, relaxing from busy work schedules, members of this church tend to linger and socialize Saturday afternoons after church services. This usually goes on until sunset, because in order to keep the seventh-day Sabbath holy, Seventh-day Adventists do not engage in non-religious activities on Saturdays until sunset. This precious time could be used to call or pick up friends or relatives to listen to an evangelistic sermon in the church. The programs and sermons should be carefully planned or monotony

will kill the interest.

Bible Readings in the Home

This program of Bible study is where Seventh-day Adventists around the world reap a large number of converts from both Christian and Muslim backgrounds. Names of interested persons can be obtained from various sources. Members should be encouraged to seek interested names for Bible study. They could be obtained from daily contacts, relatives and friends, Bible Correspondence School, house-to-house visitations, church guest book, children of members of baptismal age, etc. Able members should be trained to give Bible studies; other members can be trained to use the video, projector, or cassette Bible studies.

The Pastor's Class

This is a special Bible study class conducted by the church pastor usually at the same time when regular Sabbath School classes meet. Attending this class are young people who are of baptismal age who need basic doctrinal instructions to prepare them for baptism. Fundamental doctrines of the church are discussed. Guests visiting the church would feel more comfortable in this pastor's class than sitting in one of the regular Sabbath School classes.

Magazine Subscriptions

The church should maintain funds for Christian magazine subscriptions to be given away in their evangelistic program. There are many good magazines available for this purpose and there is one in Indonesian that should interest

many Indonesians.

The Ingathering Campaign

This is a yearly event sponsored by the Seventh-day Adventist denomination to solicit funds for worthy projects. This is an excellent way of distributing literature in the neighborhood. Names of interested persons can be obtained for Bible studies or enrollment in the Bible Correspondence School.

Campus Bible Study Groups

A large percentage of Indonesians in the United States are students. Students in this Azusa church should start Bible study groups with other Indonesian students in their schools.

Many more ideas could be added to this list, but a long list would not help make a better evangelistic program. If the church could seriously work on some of the ideas already listed, especially those which include the Muslims, then they are on their way to fulfilling their evangelistic mission.

Evangelism for Muslim Indonesians

.Basic Principles

This section gives some practical guidelines which will help the lay evangelist establish an effective approach in witnessing to Muslim friends and relatives. These guidelines are based on two basic principles. First, is the all important principle of love. The apostle Paul's chapter

on love in first Corinthians, thirteenth chapter, should be made the first guideline in any relationship with Muslims. When you love your Muslim friends whom you wish to reach with the Gospel message, you will be gentle, kind and understanding with them. You will answer their objections with kindness and try to avoid arguments. You will not attack the person whom they believe to be the prophet of God, but you can recognize Muhammad as a great personality. Instead of trying to defend Christian doctrines, you uplift the love of Christ and His pardoning grace. You do not attack the Muslim's religion or their holy book. Instead, you show them the clear and true word of God in the Bible.

Sensitive topics, such as politics, should be avoided, as they can only cause irritation and anger. Your sincere love for them will urge you to share with them the blessings you have received as a Christian. Share with them the peace and joy you have in the assurance of sins forgiven and salvation through Jesus Christ. Show them how you are enjoying a personal relationship with God and that he can have these blessings too. Point them to a God of love and mercy who is willing to forgive and save, who is not a stern judge who loves to punish the wicked in the Day of Judgment. This type of love relationship will break down prejudice and win the hearts of Muslims to Christ. These points have been discussed in Chapter 3, and every lay evangelist who wants to work with Muslims should be familiar with these vital

points of why Muslims should convert to Christianity.

The second principle is clarifying misunderstandings. As discussed earlier in Chapter 3, many of the theological differences are really based on misunderstandings, including major differences such as the authenticity of the Bible, the unity of God, the Divine Sonship of Jesus, etc. Just as the principle of love can break down walls of prejudice, so also can clearing up these misunderstandings help to open Muslim doors to listen to the Gospel message. When working with this second principle, you should never forget the first principle of love. When answering an objection you can show them that there is really no difference to argue about; there is simply a misunderstanding of words, for example. You can help to clear many of these misunderstandings by encouraging them to read the Bible, of which the Qur'an speaks so highly. Explain the Bible very simply in a language easily understood. Do not use difficult theological concepts. Be extremely cautious in using the Qur'an in Gospel witnessing, as it tends to recognize the authority of the Qur'an on spiritual matters. There is also the danger of misusing, misquoting, and misinterpreting Qur'anic passages. Stay with the Bible, and do not pretend you are familiar with the Qur'an. Use the Qur'an as an initial step for a reluctant Muslim; then proceed to uplift the Bible.

Commonalities Between Seventh-day Adventists and Muslims

A very good way to clear misunderstandings and break down walls of prejudice is to show them some commonalities that exist between Muslims and Christians. Seventh-day Adventists have an advantage over other Christian groups in presenting the Gospel message to Muslims, because Seventh-day Adventists are in practice and doctrine closer to Islam. For example, one of the greatest taboos in Islam is the eating of swines' flesh. There are a number of passages in the Qur'an which forbid the eating of pork; it is considered unclean (haram). "These things only has He forbidden you: carrion, blood, and flesh of swine, what has been hallowed to other than God."¹ Among Muslims, Christians are known as pork-eating people. Many Adventists do not eat any kind of meat for health reasons, but all refrain from the unclean meats of the Old Testament, particularly pork. It would come as a big surprise to a Muslim to hear that your Christian religion practices total abstinence from swines' flesh. It usually arouses their curiosity, and makes them eager to find out more about your religion.

There are a number of commonalities that a Seventh-day Adventist evangelist can very effectively use to arouse the interest of a Muslim and begin a conversation on spiritual matters. The following are some such commonalities:

¹Sura 2:166.

1. Eating of blood. In the Qur'anic text quoted above, the eating of blood is forbidden. A Seventh-day Adventist can tell his Muslim friends that, like the eating of pork, there are a number of passages in the Bible that prohibit the eating of blood.

2. Western music. By this, Indonesians do not mean country music as Americans understand it, but any music of Western culture, especially jazz and rock and roll. The sale and use of this type of music was once prohibited by the Indonesian government, along with the use of high heeled shoes by men, and Western type dancing. Seventh-day Adventists have all along been cautioning against the dangers of these "worldly" influences.

3. Western-type dancing is another taboo to Seventh-day Adventists, as well as to Muslims. It has a strong degenerating influence upon the spiritual life of Christians and Muslims.

4. The use of alcoholic drinks. Both Seventh-day Adventists and Muslims condemn the use of alcoholic beverages, because it is against the teaching of the Bible and the Qur'an. In the Qur'an is written, "O believers, wine and arrow-shuffling, idols and divining arrows are an abomination, some of Satan's work; so avoid it; haply so you will prosper."²

²Sura 5:92.

5. The moral law. Seventh-day Adventists believe in the validity of the moral law of the Ten Commandments, and Muslims believe in the validity of the moral law of the Qur'an.

6. The Judgment Day message is the message of the Seventh-day Adventist Church since the beginning; it is also the very message of Muhammad to the people of Mecca since the beginning of his ministry.

7. Islam in Biblical prophecy. Both Adventists and Muslims see Islam in Biblical prophecy, although in different prophecies. Muslims see the prophet Muhammad prophesied in Deuteronomy 18: 15, 18 and in the Paraclete prophecies. Seventh-day Adventists see Islam in the prophecies of Revelation, chapters nine to eleven.

8. State of the dead. Unlike most Christian churches and other religions, Seventh-day Adventists and Muslims believe in the unconscious state of the dead. The Qur'an states, "It shall be as if, on the day they see it, they have but tarried for an evening, or its forenoon."³

Social Events

Church sponsored social events like Christmas, New Year, birthday parties, sports, recreation, etc. can be used very effectively to establish new contacts, to develop friendships, and to demonstrate the actual Christian way of

³Sura 79:46.

life to Muslims. Muslim friends and contacts should be invited to such social events. In the Muslim mind, Christians are a people given to drinking strong drinks, eating unclean meats, especially pork, and dancing, especially in their social parties. This is why Muslims usually avoid Christian social parties. Members of this Indonesian-American Seventh-day Adventist Church love to attend parties, either sponsored by the church or individually. In each of their parties they usually have an abundance of food served. Muslims attending such parties will observe that there is no unclean food served, most food is vegetarian, no one smokes, no strong drinks are served, no dancing or foul language are allowed, and the people are friendly.

Cooking Class

Free cooking classes could be offered to teach the ladies to prepare a delicious, healthful vegetarian diet. The men should also be invited to sample the food thus prepared.

Public Evangelistic Campaigns

This type of evangelistic outreach may bring some results with the Christian Indonesians, but not with the Muslims. Inviting Muslim friends to evangelistic campaigns held for Christians is also not advisable. The singing, the prayer, and the use of many Christian phrases and words may offend them. Do not offend the Muslims prematurely by the use of Christian terminology in your conversation. This

should be delayed until they have heard and understood more about Christianity. Even a simple Christian prayer can offend a Muslim who would never dare to pray without first going through the rituals, as we have seen in Chapter 3.

Bible Correspondence Course

This is one of the most, if not the most, effective means of the propagation of the Gospel this church can use in evangelizing their Muslim friends and relatives. It has been used and is still being used very effectively in Indonesia. The same course used in Indonesia with some minor changes could be used here. This method of evangelism takes the Gospel to the people where they are. It is not a once in a year contact, but a constant, persistent, continuous visit of the Word of God into the Muslim homes with a very organized, professional way of bringing the good news step by step, with much care as not to offend them in any way. Space is provided for any questions or comments they have to make to which a prompt response is given. The importance of follow-up work to such a program could not be overemphasized. Church members should be prepared to make friendly visits as may be requested which may involve in some answering of questions about the lessons they are receiving.

Pamphlets and Books for Muslims

There are several books used by the Seventh-day Adventist Church in Indonesia written especially for Muslims,

which is an excellent way of taking the Gospel message to the Muslims. Free attractive books could be given to Muslim friends interested in knowing the Christian message.

Testimonies of Former Muslims

Used in conjunction with Bible studies in homes or any evangelistic effort where Muslims are involved, personal testimony is a very powerful way of demonstrating to them the change that could be done easily, and of the wonderful blessings which come as a result of this change.

CHAPTER 5

Summary and Conclusion

Seventh-day Adventists believe that their work is part of the continuing evangelistic work which began with the giving of the Great Commission by the Lord Jesus Christ. William Miller, in the late 1840s, and the pioneers of the Seventh-day Adventist Church have taken upon themselves the task of the proclamation of the Gospel. Their evangelistic work is intensified by their belief in the immediate return of Jesus Christ to this earth to take with Him to heaven all who accepted Him as their savior. Evangelism to them is, therefore, the obedience to Christ's Great Commission to proclaim the Gospel to all the world, and to prepare a people ready to be saved by Jesus at His second coming.

This Advent message was spread all over the world, and it reached the shores of Indonesia at the turn of the century. Evangelistic progress in Indonesia is not as rapid as in Christian countries. With an estimated Muslim population of 140 million, Indonesia has more Muslims than all the countries of the Middle East, and certainly more than any single country in the world.

Evangelism among Muslims is a difficult task, because of the prejudice and antagonism that existed through the

last fourteen centuries between these two great world religions. Modern political situations between Muslim and Christian countries tend to make things worse. Christian evangelists tend to avoid working among Muslims, fearing the opposition they might face and the small apparent results, if any, after giving a long, hard, sacrificial service.

This same feeling is also seen in the members of the Azusa Indonesian-American church. As a church responsible for the evangelization of Indonesian-Americans, its evangelistic outreach in the past has never been planned to reach the Muslims. Some aggressive evangelistic campaigns have been held, but evangelizing the Muslims has been totally neglected. Having been a member of this church since it was first organized in 1974, and having done evangelistic work in Indonesia for fifteen years, the writer is of the opinion that besides fearing the adversities they might face, this neglect is caused by the lack of any knowledge of Islam and how to approach them. This is why this project capitalizes on trying to understand the Muslim mind. In the first part of Chapter 3, we have briefly discussed the historical background, faith and practice of Islam. We then went on to make summary discussions on a layman-to-layman level--where a Christian layman can be more intelligible in his discussions with a Muslim layman--about some basic theological differences that usually come up in an encounter with a Muslim. Knowing these facts will give members of

this church more confidence, and do away with the fear of dealing with a Muslim.

Questions on theological issues that usually come up could be divided into two categories: the authenticity of the Bible and the doctrine of the Godhead. The Christian doctrine on these issues as such are not discussed in this paper.

On the question of the authority of the Bible, we have seen that the Scriptures are frequently mentioned in the Qur'an and that they are considered revelations from God just like the Qur'an. However, the Muslims charge that the Bible has been so changed or corrupted that it is no longer reliable and bears very little resemblance to the Scriptures supported in the Qur'an. We have seen that both the New and the Old Testament as we have them today are virtually identical with the ones in existence in Muhammad's day and even centuries before his birth.

On the Muslim theory of abrogation, or the doctrine that later revelation supersedes earlier revelation, we have seen that the testimony of the Qur'an itself contradicts this, referring not to the Bible, but to certain verses in the Qur'an itself, which are declared to be annulled.

The Christian doctrine of the Godhead is an area that has drawn the most attack and scoffing from Muslims. They charge that Christians are continuously committing shirk, the sin that God cannot forgive, by placing another god

equal with God. They do not realize that Christianity and Islam are together in believing in the unity of God. This misunderstanding comes from the use of words such as "persons" of the Godhead, which to a Muslim could only convey the idea of corporeal and physical. The Christian term "Son of God," as applied to Jesus Christ, has been misunderstood by Muslims to mean that Jesus was God's son as a result of a physical relationship with Mary, not metaphorically as understood by Christians. On the death of Jesus on the cross, Muslim commentators, as well as Qur'an itself, have given vague and conflicting statements. Finally, the Muslim concept of forgiveness of sins and salvation is discussed, and it is emphasized that the only way to have assurance of sins forgiven and salvation is through faith in the atoning blood of Jesus.

Chapter 4 lists some practical recommendations for this church in their evangelistic program. It also gives some hints and counsel obtained from the experiences of missionaries to Muslim countries and that of the writer himself in working among Muslims in Indonesia.

When this Indonesian-American Seventh-day Adventist Church is willing to re-evaluate its evangelistic program, to keep in mind their heritage as an evangelistic oriented people, and to re-direct their program to put more emphasis on reaching their Muslim countrymen, then they will accomplish the mission for which they exist.

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